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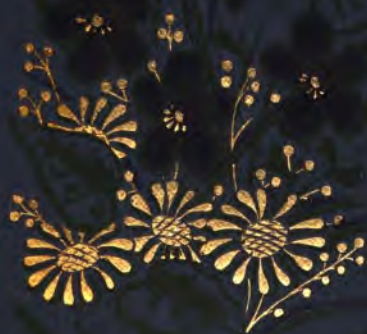
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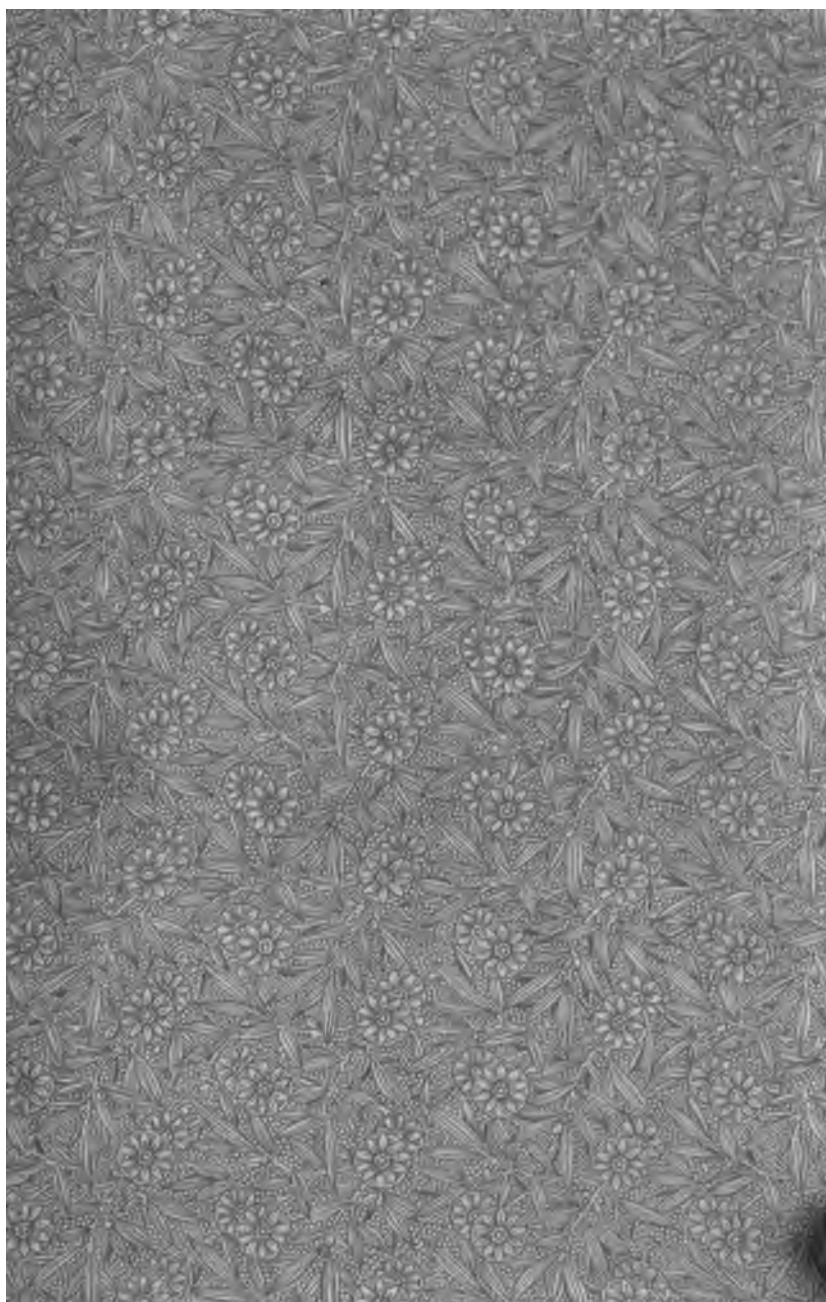
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NETTIE
AND
KATE





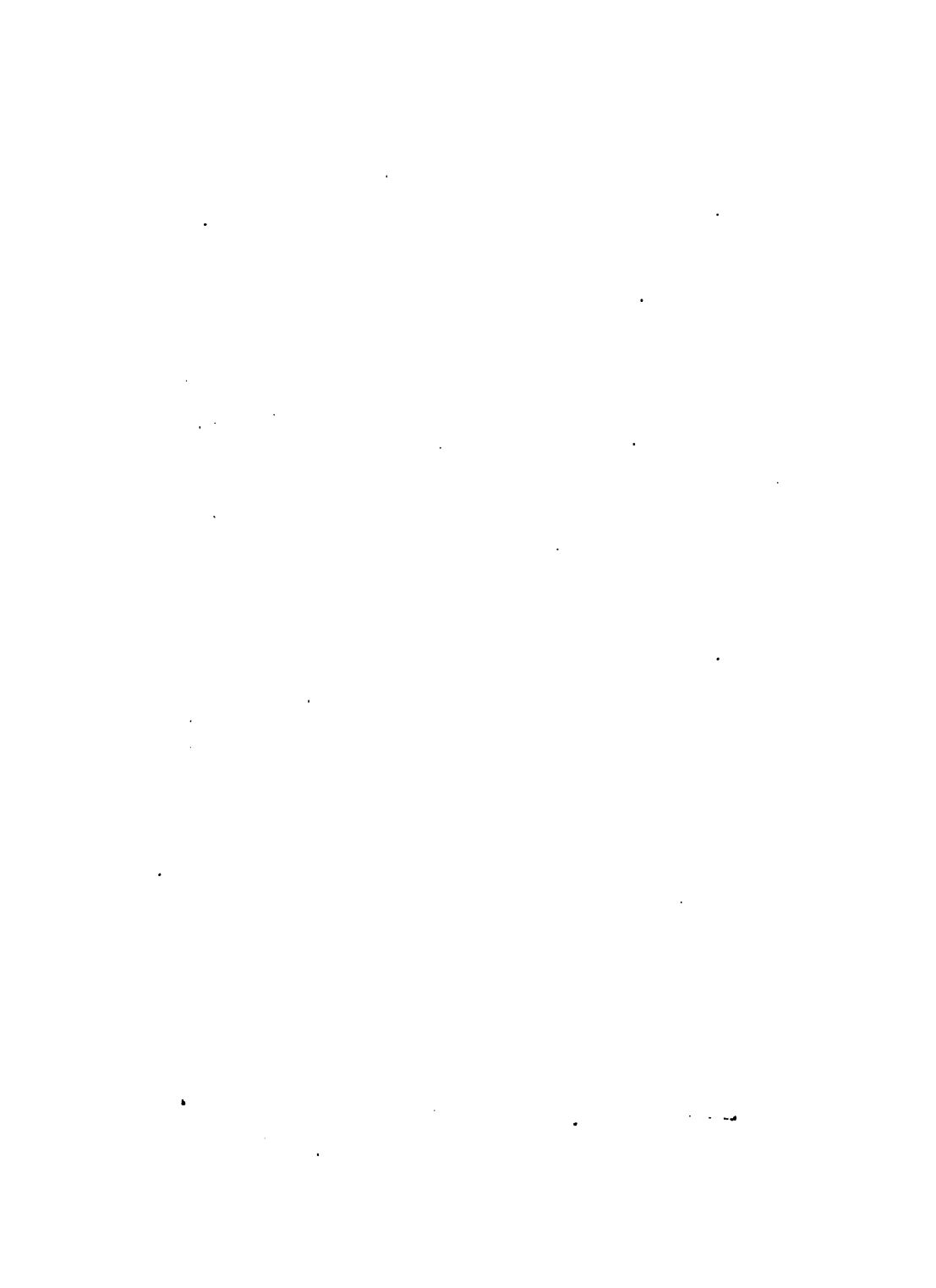








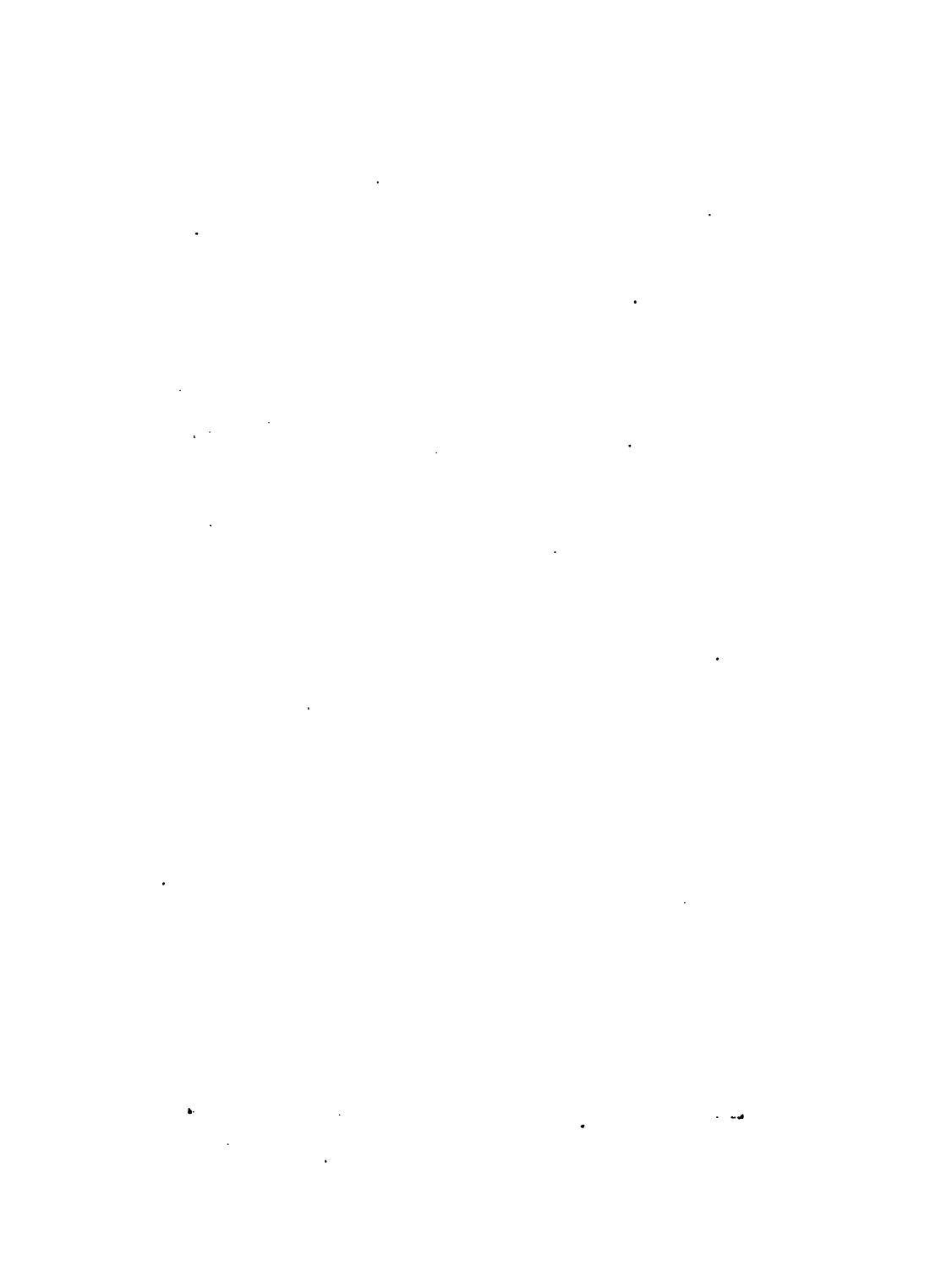
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"There was nothing which stirred Kate's careless impulsive heart as the fine music of her friend."—Page 12.

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NETTIE AND KATE;

OR,

Onward to the Heights of Life.

BY

F. L. M.



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HODDER AND STOUGHTON,

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ONWARD.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEWS.

"He shall receive such vision as shall lift him from his selfishness and so enlarge his soul, that he shall stand redeemed from all unworthiness, and saved to happiness and heaven."—*Holland's Kathrina.*

NESTLING in a secluded valley, between two opposite ranges of hills, lies the town of Belmont. These hills, green in summer with fresh, bright verdure and luxuriant foliage, are just now covered with snow, and clinging fragments of ice, sparkling and flashing back the rays of this afternoon's sun.

This is a busy little town—its commercial en-

terprise partly owing to the fact that a river, fed by hidden streams in the hill-tops flows impetuously past, on to the distant sea.

Not far from the river, on one of the most crowded streets, stands an old church—its sloping roof, too, covered with a beautifully pure mantle of snow, from which the tall spire emerges like a sentinel keeping guard over buried treasures.

In contrast to the dazzling brightness outside, there is a subdued, cathedral-like light within, very restful to the tired eyes of a young man who, on hearing the rich, deep tones of the organ, had stopped on the threshold to listen. But almost at the same moment he noticed a young lady descending the stairs from the gallery.

“How do you do, Miss Sarah?” said he, as he lifted his hat. “Have you been practising all the afternoon? I think the advent of a real, live missionary, into the religious society of Belmont, has done a good deal in arousing the interest of those who always require extraordinary stimulus to rouse their enthusiasm. . . I suppose that at the meeting, he has been induced to appoint for next Friday evening, he will give you, in place

of the vague ideas universally current, definite knowledge in regard to the claims and needs of foreign missions. I heard Miss Wallace say that she was glad that the poor, benighted heathen will not be present; they might feel embarrassed at being the subject of so many remarks!"

"Mr. Derwent has made her promise to take the soprano solo in the anthem we are going to sing. It was hard work, though. You would have laughed at the things she said about it. She bothered me all the time we were practising."

"Where is she now? The choir must have broken up long ago."

"Yes; but she and Nettie are up-stairs. Net as usual, at the organ. I felt I could not wait any longer for her, so am going home. Good-bye."

"Good-bye. I think I'll stay awhile and listen;" and with a bow, Arthur McDonald turned into the empty church.

The young girl of whom he had spoken was, meanwhile, standing near her friend at the organ, up-stairs, in the gallery. She had a tall commanding figure, brown, wavy hair, and dark blue eyes. Her face was one of singular brightness,


evidently a reflection of the sunlight shining outside. She was as different from her friend as the imagination can conceive—perhaps in that very difference lay the strong attraction which each found in the other. Nettie's nature was dreamy, idealistic, almost morbidly sensitive; Kate was practical, independent of people's opinions, not entirely dependent on their love, for happiness.

It was not two years since the Burtons had come to live in Belmont, and from their first meeting at church, a subtle, indefinable but powerful magnetism, has drawn the two girls together. In all her troubles, and the depressing conditions of her home-life, Nettie found support in the stronger more self-reliant Kate; while under her influence Kate found repose from her own turbulence of passionate impulse.

"Play that Sonata of Mozart's," she called out, as the fingers paused over the key-board and silence reigned through the aisles and arches of the old church.

"I couldn't to-day—that is, with any taste. It is too foreign to my mood—too free and joyous."

"What is the matter with my darling?" exclaimed Kate, coming to her side.



"Oh, nothing; but the old selfish lamentation. I've been worried all day with such trivial things, and I do so want a little more time to myself. If I only knew some one who would help me to play, as I know I could, with just a few hints. I never come up to my ideal."

"Now if I were only Beethoven, what fun it would be! I would take you under my especial patronage, and abound in hints from rosy morn till dewy, shady evening. Not much dew in December, however, unfortunately for my rhetoric."

Nettie smiled up into the bright face, clouded only by sympathy for her.

"Sit down in that far corner," she said, "while I play that reverie of Chopin's which Mr. Lockwood once said he liked. . . Oh Kate! I am so anxious about him. Arthur says that for three whole weeks he did not see him. He was away from home on a terrible 'spree' as the boys call it. What will become of him? I almost lose hope."

"I feel sure the change will come soon. Darkest hour just before the dawn, always remember," replied Kate, as she moved away.

Almost the same moment the church was filled

with grand rolling billows of harmony. There was nothing which stirred Kate's careless, impulsive heart, as the fine music of her friend. It seemed to awaken thought and feelings akin to hers — feelings very near sadness.

It was about an hour after, that Nettie became conscious of a tall form, with uncovered head and folded arms, standing in the gathering gloom on the other side of the organ. As the last note died away into silence, she turned around and spoke unceremoniously, "Good-evening, Arthur."

"I heard the organ as I was passing, and thought I would come in. But won't you play some more?"

"Oh, I think not. It is later than I intended to play. . . And Kate, ain't you cold?"

"I believe I am slightly infected with that agreeable sensation," answered Kate, emerging into view. "How do you do, Mr. McDonald?"

"If you are cold, you must not stay here," he said, with masculine decision.

"Give me the key, Nettie, I'll lock the organ. And so you are going to have the innovation of a missionary meeting in this formal church of ours. It will doubtless help to open people's rather tight

money bags on behalf of those black fellows who have the extreme misfortune to be educated in the heterodox religion of Buddha. . . What a waste of time and energy they cause any way! But I suppose you both have the enthusiastic missionary spirit. For my part such an investment of money seems insecure and not very sensible."

"By the way," he continued, as the three friends passed into the street, "I have a most precious bit of news for your eager ears. Now Kate, restrain your curiosity till I help Nettie over this snowdrift. . . Well, Jack Lockwood, who for three weeks was so drunk that he didn't know his own name, went the other day to Mr. Ellerton's house, informing him of a strange change which had come over the spirit of his dream. Behold the rare instance of a skeptic transformed into a believer in Christ, a convivial wine-drinker into a stern rejecter of earthly pleasures. . . How beautifully opinions can be changed in order to improve a rather unenviable reputation?"

These cutting, sarcastic words grieved Nettie.


"Are you quite sure of his insincerity?" she asked.

As Arthur's eyes rested on her shadowed face, his whole expression changed.

"Pardon me, for speaking of my distrust. . . We fellows haven't the faith in each other that you have in us," he added, with a roguish laugh at Kate's astonished face.

"Oh thou masculine vanity, how disagreeable thou art in the eyes of the inferior creation!" she exclaimed, stooping down and picking up a hand-full of snow with a threatening gesture towards this representative of masculine egotism. At that moment his foot slipped on a piece of ice. Kate's merry laugh rang out in the clear air.

"Behold the undignified overthrow of pride!" she said, as he regained his feet. Nettie looked meaningly at her, but unheeding the warning the impulsive girl continued, "Arthur, it is a trite but true adage that pride 'must have a fall.' I need no illustration to point the application. We have one already at hand. I hope this fall will prove a valuable lesson to your wayward heart. Neglect not to learn it. . . Here I am at home at last. Good-bye, Nettie. Arthur, if you don't want to quarrel with her, too, I warn you to be careful how you speak of absent friends."



With a bright smile she opened the gate and left the two to go on.

"Kate was always exceedingly light-hearted," said Arthur, at last breaking a prolonged silence, "but lately she has been hilarious. She *will* not talk sensibly with me, or let me say a serious word. The minute I begin she is off upon the path of some ridiculous thought... What are you thinking of?" he asked suddenly, looking at the grave, preoccupied face by his side.

Nettie half started at his question.

"I was thinking of Dr. Lockwood. I am surprised at what you have told us. Surprised, too, that you can speak so of your friend."

"I am sorry that I did; but it does not seem to me that a change such as he says he has experienced can be a natural outgrowth of his habits of thought. Why, he almost hated the sight of the Bible. I suppose because the spirit of its precepts is so utterly opposed to actions such as his. His whole intellectual bent is towards materialism; only about a month ago he gave me his views. His professions now of faith in the God of Christianity, of penitence, and what not, are most contrary to his former assertions."

"Why, however, do you assume, without proof, the impossibility of an inner radical change as the cause of this profession? Would such an inference be illogical?"

"No, perhaps not. But you give such a short time for such a thorough change."

"God works by miracles now, as well as in the old days. The miracle of the conversion of a human soul from sin to his service, is the most wonderful and mysterious of all."

"I do not believe in miracles."

"Why?"

"They are contrary to law, Nettie. Law rules in the universe, therefore they are impossible."

"I suppose you have been reading Hume lately. I believe his objection has force only because we limit nature to the physical universe."

"Pray, what else ought it to include?"

"Man and the sphere of his action."

"Do you know, Nettie, there are a thousand refutations of Argyll's theory?"

"Of course. What great truth has not called forth hostile criticism? You will to move your arm, Arthur, and according to the laws of your own constitution you do move it. You do not

call that a miracle because you say it was done in obedience to law; and yet it would not have taken place unless you had willed it. Now, why can you not rise to the conception of a divine will, determining to bring about a certain result, and making use of certain means, according to laws established by himself, for the accomplishment of that result? The means may be beyond our knowledge, but the action which we, to cover our ignorance, call a miracle, is not, necessarily, a violation of the laws of nature."

"Well, how do you apply your theory to Jack Lockwood?"

"Why could there not exist certain laws by which his conversion was accomplished, according to the will of God? We did not see their working, but we do see their glorious result."

"I cannot see what means were available for such a result," said Arthur, smiling. Then after a moment's pause, he went on; "You know he is very humorous—a real jolly fellow, in fact. Well, you would have laughed, even while being shocked, at what I witnessed only about a week since as I was in his room. He caricatured one or two Christian people very amusingly. . . Net-

tie! don't try to convince me that he is really changed. He is either assuming a part to gain influence, or to restore people's tottering trust, or the whole thing is a contemptible burlesque."

At the moment Arthur ceased speaking, a hand was laid familiarly on his shoulder, and a deep voice said behind them:

"Well, McDonald, what are you and Miss Burton discussing? It must be something absorbing, to make you both cut me."

Arthur was confused and surprised. As he did not reply, the other delinquent answered for him:

"Speak of certain people and they often appear, Dr. Lockwood. We were discussing your merits."

Then there was an awkward pause. Nettie involuntarily quickened her steps, and felt intuitively that she was between two discordant elements. Not until they came to the corner of Brunson street, did Arthur speak:

"I suppose you will have company the rest of the way, Miss Burton," he said, as he lifted his hat. "As it is late I know you will excuse me

from going too." And before Lockwood could object, he hurried away.

Nettie, anticipating her companion's apology, immediately said :

"Don't speak of it, Dr. Lockwood. He has no cause to be annoyed."

The doctor's fine face lit up with a bright smile.

"I could not help joining you, for I wished to tell you something."

"I know it already, and am so glad for you. It is what so many of us have been praying for. . . We almost lost hope at one time."

"Oh, Miss Burton, if you will only have confidence that the change in me is real! help me, because I myself have so little! I cannot shut my eyes to the fact that many distrust my sincerity — especially my long-tried friend, Arthur. I wrote him all about myself a week ago, and ever since he has avoided me. Whenever I have accidentally seen him, his distrust has not been disguised. I know that he wonders that I, who a week ago believed Christianity to be a superstitious delusion, can have so soon altered my belief."

"He has no conception of the power of God's Spirit, you know."


"What can I do to convince him of my sincerity? He never doubted it before."

"Live so that your life shall be a visible refutation of his suspicions. There is no power like the power of a Christian life."

"I fear mine will be so weak. I have to struggle with tendencies towards evil which few have. . . . How I have despised myself for yielding so often! How often I have resolved to break from the chains which seem to bind my whole life. That these resolutions have all been broken, makes me now distrust my power to resist. The temptation is so strong. Then I am haunted by the idea that perhaps after all I may die as my father did; that this tendency is inherited, and cannot be conquered. What if it really should be so?"

"Do not fear, but rely entirely on Christ's help. You can indeed do nothing without him. He will never fail you — he is so trustworthy, so sure. In all perplexity, darkness and heart-sickness, never forget that."

The encouragement with which her strong faith inspired him, Dr. Lockwood did not express in words. But his eyes did express something of it,



as he looked down at her standing at the gate of her home.

“May I come and let you help me sometimes?” he asked. “I feel I shall need *human* sympathy and companionship in the struggles through which I *know* I shall have to pass.”

“Whenever you need me, come.”

No more was said. The next moment she had entered the house, and he had disappeared in the twilight.

CHAPTER II.

A GLANCE AT THREE PEOPLE.

"Trust a man to be good and true, and even if he is not, your trust will tend to make him good and true."

—*Max Muller.*

THAT evening, as Kate gathered up her books to go up-stairs to study, her father, in strange harmony with the thoughts with which her own mind had been occupied since her return home, was heard saying to his wife:

"Mr. Ellerton told me to-day that Jack Lockwood has signed the pledge, and wants to join the church. I suppose you are aware that for the last month previous to his awakening, there was scarcely an hour in which he was perfectly sober.

Dr. Dent told me he was very unreliable. Of course it is a great responsibility, accepting him as one of our members. I, for one, would be in favor of waiting a while to see how sincere are his motives. It would not be for the credit of the church to have him turn out badly in the end."

Kate's face flushed, and her eyes shone with something like anger, as she exclaimed impulsively :

"I am not a member of the church, and I can't say I want to be one ; but if I were, I should not relish my motives being the subject of public discussion, nor having them weighed in the balance of the judgments of people to whom I think myself eminently superior."

"But in offering himself to the church he must expect criticism," responded her father, mildly.

"But if you all distrust him, why will he not lose faith for himself? If I thought you had no confidence in me — in my efforts to conquer this unpleasant temper of mine, which you lecture me about so much — I believe I would give up, and by and by be thoroughly consumed by the fire of my own anger."

In her moments of earnest argument, Kate's

words did not always keep pace with her rapid ideas. Her rhetoric was apt to become confused. Mr. Wallace laughed, but looked tenderly up at the flushed face and the large eyes in which tears were trying to show themselves :

“I am glad you have confidence in Jack. You were always quite a champion of his; hoped for his reformation when we were all in despair. Yet I think your wishes obscure your judgment. If he should fall, being a member of the church, see what a disgrace it would bring upon it. Outsiders would say, ‘There is one of your professing Christians! A wonderful amount of good his religion does him; he is no stronger than he was before!’ That would be the inevitable consequence.”

“But what if he gets discouraged on account of not having the stimulus of his friends’ confidence, and fall the same way, will not the church be responsible?”

“I think not. If he is not strong enough to retain his integrity without such support, his sincerity is not very valuable.”

Kate turned away impatiently :

“Well, I wouldn’t join that church even if I

considered myself in a fit spiritual condition, which at the present time is far from being the case, because I despise the narrow bigotry and cold uncharitableness which is but too manifest in almost all its members."

Hastily snatching her Euclid she went swiftly from the room.

.

Away up-town in a small bachelor-like room, sat Dr. Lockwood. He had been reading, but the book had fallen idly in his lap, and with shaded eyes he was looking into the fire. His face was very very sad, the lines of the mouth compressed as though the mind were fighting disagreeable, but ever recurring thoughts.

"How hard it is that he who most often urged me to forsake the fearful habit which was ruining me, should now forget our friendship of four dear years, and because I have resolved to lead a Christian life, as well as a moral one, should leave me to struggle without his sympathy! . . . Oh my Saviour, help me to be patient to bear this sorrow with fortitude. Oh lead him to thee teach him how weak he is, how helpless without

thee; change his self-reliant pride to humble dependence on thy wisdom, and if right — if consistent with thy plans for our best welfare, give me back his friendship —— ”

“ May I come in, Mr. Lockwood ? The woman said so,” called a boyish voice outside the door, accompanied by a not very gentle knock.

“ Why, Willie, this is unexpected,” answered Jack, rising and opening the door.

“ Kate wanted me to run up with this note. She said she didn’t want to wait till morning.”

“ Won’t you sit down ? ”

“ No, I’m going skating. The fellows are waiting outside. Good-night, sir,” and with a noisy bow the boy was gone.

“ Dear Jack :

“ It is delightful to know that you have decided to change the course of your life. I know you will succeed in changing your tendency towards that which has caused us all such bitter grief. I have faith in you, in your resolution and strength. I cannot speak from personal experience, about your intentions in regard to Christianity, of which Arthur McDonald told me to-day ; but if they help you to lead a true life, worthy of your better self, I am glad.

“ In haste, yours sincerely,

“ KATE WALLACE.”



In the noble desire to encourage him by her enthusiasm, the demonstrative, warm-hearted girl had impulsively written these cheering words — these words “in season” for which men hope and wait. And he was encouraged. The knowledge of her faith in him, the certainty of her trust, strengthened his faith in himself. But his feelings can be best determined by his own words. Turning up the lamp, he went over to his desk, and sweeping away the mass of books and pamphlets covering it, he began to write :

“ My Dear Friend :

“ I cannot express to you the feeling of comfort caused by your note just received. She, who by a sympathizing and trustful word, cheers a weary fellow-traveller up the rocky mountains of life when he is almost ready to sink down under an accumulated burden of heart-fatigue, penitence and discouraging weakness, is one of God’s ministering angels. The shadows have been thronging round my heart to-night, but your friendship is like a star, shining unchanged in the darkness. If there were more like you, to send counsel and encouragement to their brothers, struggling with temptation, personal sin, and all the host of evil, more men would break from the coils which the habit of drinking throws around them, and emerge into manly liberty, purity and happiness. Thank you, dear Kate. I pray that the

Saviour, who has above all others been the cause of this, I hope, permanent change in my tendencies of life and thought, may reveal his infinite beauty and loveliness to you. Your character is grandly fashioned, but it needs his love to glorify it. Yours gratefully,

"J. L."

.

"What are you wasting your time for, sitting by that window, Nettie? I should think you had dreamed enough for one day. Come here, and light the lamp. I am just crazy, there is so much mending to do. There! take that sock! You'll find a hole which will keep you from the blues."

Nettie started up at the sound of the sharp fretful voice, and hastened to obey the imperious command. She was unconscious of the length of time, she had been sitting by the window looking out on the wide expansive landscape, stretching from her house away to the hills beyond, which, hoary with frost and snow, lifted up their heads in majesty to Heaven. The moon had risen from a surrounding bed of clouds, and the evergreens, bending low under their burden of ice, flashed back her rays in brilliant points of light. Yet though the beauty, the calm stillness of the

scene outside, had entered into her heart, and given her that peculiar delight which nature can impose only to those in possession of fine, poetical sensibility, Nettie was puzzled, disappointed and unhappy. Between every sparkling and glittering bough the wistful eyes of John Lockwood looked out upon her, but behind was always the fascinating face of Arthur McDonald, its usual expression, by her excited imagination, exaggerated into one of sneering mockery, that sent a chill through her heart. Even after the lamp was lit, and she settled down with the stockings in her hands, intent on decreasing the holes made by the shuffling feet of one of her little brothers, the two faces were still before her, and her thoughts clustered round them closely. How the unsympathetic tones of her mother jarred on her sensitive ear, as household details and neighbors' gossip were repeated and elucidated to a wearisome length! Every now and then, when necessary, she would make some revelant remark, but her grave look signified unmistakably that her mind was absent. At last Mrs Burton exclaimed impatiently:

"If you thought less of those useless things

you and that conceited Arthur McDonald are forever harping about, you might have some space left in your mind for entertaining your mother."

"Mr. McDonald is not proud," she replied, passing over the latter part of the sentence, and involuntarily changing the offensive adjective.

"Well, he isn't in one way, for he is condescending to us poor folks, considering he is so rich."


"His friendship is not condescension, mother. I am intrinsically, as rich as he, and he has the discrimination to perceive it," answered Nettie, spiritedly.

"Well, well, keep your temper. He's terribly conceited, however, don't you think so?"

"If he is, he has reason to be, for not many have accomplished as much in their whole lifetime, as he has in his twenty-one years."

"What in the world is he going to do with all his learning? He'll by and by get beyond enduring the commonplace society here."

"He is going some time in February, to New York, to be junior partner in the great firm of Lovell and Black, lawyers."



"Is any one going with him?" asked Mrs Burton, looking eagerly at the fine head drooping over the troublesome sock.

"I don't know. Why do you ask?"

"Oh I thought a young man of his taste and not having to wait for success, before getting settled, would likely ——"

"But to Nettie's great relief, her mother at that moment was called away up-stairs, and once more congenial quiet reigned in the room. But soon the boys came trooping in from their skating expedition up the river; Sarah and Mr. Burton returned from a visit next door, and loud and sometimes merry, was the talk. Nevertheless the merriment died away when Mrs. Burton once more returned to the sitting-room, with a freely uttered complaint that the boys had tracked the snow into the hall, and flung their skates down on the floor; at the same time sharply enquiring why her husband had stayed so late and thus forgotten that there was no kindling wood cut for the fire. With scowling faces the boys picked up the offending skates, and Mr. Burton quietly threw down the slippers in which

he had just buried his feet, once more resumed his boots, and left for the woodshed.

At last the darning which Nettie despised herself for considering odious and wearisome, was finished. With a sigh, a luxury in which she often found occasion to indulge, she rose to put away the basket, and unlocking a drawer in the old-fashioned table, she drew out one of Arthur's books.

As her attention became absorbed in its pages, her mind scanning eagerly the different lines of thought; now tracing out to its ultimate result some mysterious but beautiful allusion, then passively enjoying some more complete and clear description, she became oblivious of the petty talk around her, and did not notice that one by one the others strayed off to bed, and that finally she and her father alone occupied the room. Glancing up at last, she noticed that his head had fallen forward, and he was looking into the dying fire with his usual expression of calm and patient benignity. Closing the book, she went round to his side:

"Papa, I want you."

In response to the implied request, he put

out his arms with a loving gesture, and she nestled into them. "You dear old fellow," she said, softly. "I have just been aching all the evening to tell you what causes me a great deal of happiness. Dr. Lockwood — you know, old Dr. Dent's former student, now his partner, in whom we girls have been so interested lately, chiefly because it seemed such a pity that a man of his talent, and with such brilliant prospects for advancement in his profession, should spoil his life by dissipation. Well, I heard to-day that he has been converted, and will probably join the church. Isn't it nice?"

She raised her head from Mr. Burton's shoulder, and looked eagerly into his face.

"Now I want you to do all you can to encourage him, with your advice and friendship. Will you?"

"Yes, Pussie; I am your man. I will call on him to-morrow."

"Thank you; I knew you would. And now I must go to bed, for I am real sleepy. Are you not coming?" she asked, taking up her lamp.

"Yes, I suppose I may as well," he replied. . .

"What a girl Kate Wallace is," remarked Sarah,

looking up from her Bible, as Nettie entered the room. "You should have heard her this afternoon at the choir practice. It was scandalous. She seems to have no dignity, nor regard for the sacredness of a church. Why, she often smiles when the minister is preaching."

"I suppose some expression sends the thought off in the direction of some ludicrous association," answered Nettie, wearily.

"I can't understand it. His sermons are so solemn and searching, that I don't see how any one, who even isn't a Christian, can laugh. I can't understand how you can make so many excuses for her."

As a matter-of-fact, Sarah had no conception of the depths of tenderness, pathos and noble thought, in Kate's fine nature. She certainly could not sympathetically appreciate her most conspicuous characteristic, vast capacity for humor, and a keen perception of the ridiculous. She had expressed her wonder before, and Nettie knew that any championship of her friend always proved useless, yet she could not forbear making one more trial to-night.

"Few understand Kate Wallace. She is one

of those most open to misconception. As dear old Shakespeare would express it, she doesn't wear her heart upon her sleeve for daws to peck at. Her apparent frankness but hides her actual reserve. If the surface is ruffled and stormy, underneath, the current runs clear and strong."

But this was no explanation to Sarah. With a mystified look in her blue eyes, she jumped into bed, and was soon under the influence of the far-famed Morpheus. And Nettie, as she pulled aside the curtains to once more refresh her tired eyes with the precious moonlight, shining if possible with added brightness on the snow, could see a light burning far away in one of the windows of the large house on the hill. Wondering what Arthur was reading, and with almost sad thoughts of the two friends, both so dear to her; one in direct antagonism to her religion, the other, as she supposed, carelessly indifferent to its requirements, it was long before sleep came to tranquilize and bless.

CHAPTER III.

THE SPY.

"It is more shameful to distrust our friends than to be deceived by them."—*La Rochefoucauld.*

IN Belmont, as in all other small towns, the nearness of each person to another, caused his business, his domestic, even his secret affairs, to be objects of knowledge to every one else. This condition has its manifest disadvantages, as it tends to restrict the range of thought, and develops an inordinate regard for "small talk," and profitless discussion.

By the next evening the news of Dr. Lockwood's promised reformation had travelled from one to

another, until all who knew him, from Arthur McDonald, to the frequenters of the "Star and Garter," were cognizant of the fact that religion had exerted a power before denied to other influences, that the proud heart and brilliant mind were bowing in humble adoration before a forgiving God.

The bar-room of the "Star and Garter" was all a glow of light from brilliant gas-jets and sparkling glass ware.

"It won't be long, though, 'afore he'll be coming in here to get a drop o' the needful," said a heavily-built man, leaning over the counter, and lifting a foaming glass of ale to his lips.

"I dunno," replied the bar-keeper. "Them larned fellows have a mighty deal o' pluck. He haint got much more truck with us, you may bet your life. 'What ken I do for you, sir!'"

The question was addressed to a tall gray-haired gentleman, who just then entered the warm, cheerful room."

"A glass of brandy and hot water, and be quick about it; I am in a hurry!"

"Much doin' these days, doctor?" asked a stout

man, eyeing the foam in the bottom of the glass, significantly.

"The usual amount of work. This is rather a healthy neighborhood, you know," replied the doctor, not turning round.

"Who's sick to-night?" the other persisted.

"Nobody you are acquainted with."

"I s'pose you know that ere student of your'n is goin' to join the church, has turned saint," remarked the bar-tender, with a flourishing gesture, depositing the glass of brandy before the impatient doctor.

"Yes, it's a good thing. His work will be done better, now."

"He was gettin' pretty bad, I s'pose?"

"Yes, thanks to the charms of your place here."

The man smiled significantly:

"Oh, wall, if them fine gents patronize us, we ain't to blame for makin' the place nobby," he said, with a complacent glance around the room.

Hastily swallowing a portion of the liquor, Dr. Dent departed.

"I say, Jem, that's rich; Lockwood's a fine example, there."


"Yes," answered the stout man, laughing coarsely. "I say, Bill, I've been thinkin' while standin' here. Give me a stiff glass o' rye, and we'll talk it over — why, man! No flesh and blood can resist our charms! Ha! ha! Then he'll git discouraged, put out with himself; for all the pious folks will hear o' it."

The bar-man laughed wickedly, and leaning over to the other, began to talk. While thus engaged they did not hear the baize door open softly, nor observe that a strangely attired man, with heavy black whiskers all over the lower part of his face, and a large hat drawn closely over his eyes, had entered the room. If they could have seen those same eyes glitter, as he leaned forward to catch their words and note their actions, they would have wondered at his eager excitement. At last the conference ended, Jem looked up. A puzzled look crossed his face, and he said, rather defiantly:

"Good-evenin', stranger; a bitter cold night?"

"Yes," the stranger answered, sociably, but in a strange, muffled tone of voice.

"Will you give me a glass of sherry, sir?" he added, turning to the bar-keeper who was



eyeing him curiously, and with open-mouthed astonishment.

"Where de'ye hail from?" asked Jem. "Ever been in these parts before?"

"Yes; I came to make inquiries about a former acquaintance of mine, a Mr. John Lockwood, medical student. Where can I find him?"

"An' ye thought he'd be here, I 'spose?" said Jem, eagerly. "If ye'd come a little better'n a week ago, ye'd foind him lyin' in Bill's back parlor as drunk as a fool. But he's turned saint, so ye won't find him here no more."

"Is that so? Hasn't he been here since?"

In his eagerness to investigate Jem's face, the stranger lifted up his hand to push up his hat, but suddenly brought it again to his side.

"No, he hain't set his foot inside that there door for nine days. We kept count, didn't we, Bill? You was anxious, wasn't you, Bill?"

The man laughed coarsely. Involuntarily the stranger shrank from him. He lifted the wine-glass to his lips, but had scarcely sipped its contents, when it was restored to the counter. Putting his gloved hand in his pocket he drew out some loose change and tossing it to Bill, said:

"Then I must go to his own house to see him? I am glad, though surprised, to know that he has not been *here* for over a week. Thank you."

With a stately bow, the stranger buttoned up his coat and sought the outer air.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOCTOR'S STUDY.

"Keep thy spirit pure from worldly taint by the repellent strength of virtue." —*Bailey's Festus.*

THE morning sun shone through the glass windows of the surgery, casting a warm golden hue over the dusty books, the dingy furniture, and lighting up the brown hair of a young man who was bending over a desk away at the furthest extremity of the room. At his feet lay a cat, winking lazily at the fire, meanwhile watching contentedly the gambols of an adventurous kitten which, in spite of repeated disappointments, persisted in the vain pursuit of her own tail —

vain, because when about possessing it, the very effort to carry it off in triumph changed its base, and thus made it as unattainable as ever.

The room was very silent. To a student of even pulse, steady purposes and favorable physical condition, calmly intent on the working out of an intricate thought — such quiet would have been exceedingly grateful. But to Jack Lockwood, suffering the reaction from past excesses, tremulous, agitated, with excited brain, and quivering nerves, the silence was almost intolerable.

If he could only change places with Dr. Dent, and be riding over the snow, enjoying the variety of visiting different people, and noting the diverse manifestations of disease, instead of sitting quietly here reading descriptions of conflicting symptoms of typhoid out of a dull, technical book — an exercise that demanded patience and fortitude, of which, this morning, he seemed incapable. He wanted some companionship, something positive and tangible to draw away his thoughts from himself; but no such companionship offered itself, all was negative and desolate.

“I must either turn a somersault or die,” he muttered, looking round for means to accomplish

the one, and thus avoid the other. No sooner said than done, for he was a man of quick resources. The centre-table, loaded with instruments, books and bottles, in inextricable confusion, was with difficulty moved aside, the chairs put back against the wall, the kitten meanwhile postponing to some future time her own exercises, in order to watch with intense interest this unusual disturbance of ancient landmarks. But ere the consummation of his efforts could be attained, he espied the doctor's cutter coming up the street.

He hastily replaced the furniture, giving the kitten one or two necessary knocks, when she impeded his progress, by jumping at his flying coat-tails. Therefore, by the time Dr. Dent had entered the house, he was standing dignifiedly before the fire, with panting breath and exceedingly bright eyes—which, however, the shortsighted doctor did not discover.

"Here's a pamphlet I just got out of the post. It goes into the diagnosis of typhoid. Make an analysis of its distinctive ideas; I haven't time to read it; I anticipate we shall have some here by spring," Dr. Dent said, taking off his boots.

and elevating his professional feet on the fender. "By the way, Mrs. Purcell can't send for her medicine. I indicated that you would call this afternoon and leave her some."

"Why can't I go now, while you are not using the horse?" Jack asked, quickly.

"As you please. Come strait back, for I've got to go on a visiting drive of three miles."

Lockwood took the prescription from the doctor's outstretched hand, and immediately busied himself in making it up. In a few minutes whistling joyously, the young man, with boyish eagerness, strided from the room. Oh, the exhilarating influence of that glorious sleigh-ride! How it cleared away the "cobwebs" in his mind, sent the blood flowing swiftly, joyously, to his fingertips and made his heart beat with rapturous delight! In less than ten minutes he was back again, feeling as though he could analyze countless pamphlets on fevers, and understand the most abstract medical problem.

The old doctor started from his chair.

"Dear me, I was asleep. These sick folks work the devil with our rest. Why, you look quite freshened up, Jack," he added, noticing the red-

dened cheek and brilliant eyes of his companion. Jack smiled brightly, and took up the pamphlet. But the next moment the life currents within him were changed, the blood flowed swifter, with a hot, excited motion, he grew faint and dizzy, and but for the firm determination of his will, he would have fallen. The doctor, according to his custom before going for a long, cold drive, had filled a wine-glass, and was just raising it to his lips, when the ashy face and brightened eyes fixed hungrily on the ruby liquid, arrested him.

"For God's sake doctor, take it away. I can't, Oh, I can't resist — I must — Oh, doctor!"

With an hysterical sob, he sank into a chair.

"Why Lockwood, what ails you? You are weak and ill. Nonsense, boy, rouse up. Here, drink some. It will do you good. Your nerves are all unstrung. You see you have gone into it too strong lately, and now you feel the need of it. Why in the world can't you take one glass and then stop? I can."

"Go! don't wait, but lock it away from me. I am not strong yet, not as strong as I shall be."

With a compassionate look, and a hearty slap

on the shoulder, the doctor did his bidding, and left the surgery.

No analysis of typhoid, or earnest investigation of scientific truth that day. A more fearful fever of desire consumed him, and he had thoughts for nothing else. No one but the pitying Saviour, knew nor dreamed of the struggle he passed through that long afternoon, the hand to hand fight with temptation; the enticing suggestions of the ever-present spirit of evil, the co-operative suggestion of his own desire but heaping up obstacles before him, once overthrown, to grow but more gigantic and seemingly insurmountable. Victory came, but the soldier, tired and heartsick, knew not that it was victory. As the twilight shadows gathered in the remote corners of the surgery, more tangible shadows, joyless despondency, darkness which could be felt, fell upon his spirit.

On his way homewards, as he passed the church, his sensitive ear caught the low tones of the organ. Unable to resist the impulse, he entered, and in the shadow of a huge pillar sat down, resting his tired head on the seat in front. As the homeless traveller listens to a long unheard

song, once sung in the old days far away in childhood, and his heart beats wildly under its weight of precious memories so Dr. Lockwood listened to this music. To his vivid imagination it seemed a palpable representation of the hard experience through which he had just passed, but it embodied also a message of help and hope. Often the melody would lose itself in the harsh, discordant bass, but every now and then would emerge, the sweetness all the more beautiful because of its encircling discord. The *adagio* movement was involved and complicated, then gradually it changed to the *allegretto*, the notes tumbling over each other in glad and joyous freedom. Afterwards, by a skillful transition, the *adagio* was resumed, but divested of all entanglements, the melody moved on smoothly to the end—to Lockwood symbolic of the conquest of faith over doubt and despair, a struggle however prolonged, ending at last in silence and repose.

Nettie little dreamed that the person she longed most to help sat down there in the darkness the tears blinding the eyes as he listened. As though unwilling to let the harmony slip away and be forgotten, she repeated it again and again

until the darkness fell like a pall over the vacant pews and the long aisles. At last it was finished and then he heard her low voice in the silence which followed.

“Why Kate, I didn’t know it was so dark ! We must go. Where did I leave my muff? I wish the choir had broken up earlier. I am not half satisfied with what I have done.

“When would you ever be, darling?” Kate answered gently ; and under cover of their voices, Dr. Lockwood succeeded in escaping without detection.

CHAPTER V.

THE MISSIONARY MEETING.

"Let us think less of men and more of God."
— *Bailey's Festus.*

ON Friday about six o'clock, as Arthur entered the wide hall of the elegant house he called home, a handsome, middle-aged lady emerged from the drawing-room on the right, and greeted him with an affectionate smile of welcome.

"I am glad you are not late, my boy. Your cousins have come at last."

"Oh, preserve me from the ordeal of passing the entire evening with them," he exclaimed in a low tone, as he threw his cap on the table,

and ran his fingers through his hair — damp from clinging snowflakes.

“Now my son, I wish to speak to you about this. For my sake you must give up reading this evening. The girls are tired and will probably retire early, thus relieving you; but, before that, the courtesy necessary in a host must not be found absent in your behavior.”

“We must discuss this thoroughly, my mother. . . What in the world have they come for?” he asked, as he opened the door of his study for her to enter. But she paused on the threshold:

“Light up first. It’s chilly in here. Come into the drawing-room.”

“No, no! not yet. Give me time to muster resolution. Say, what did they come for?”

“Why do any relatives ever visit each other. Positively, Arthur, you are getting to be a perfect recluse.”

“Yes, a recluse from the society of two pure-minded, pious girls, whose sole aim and object in life is to flirt and break fellow’s hearts, and be generally insincere and false!”

“Arthur!”

“And who will talk to a simple country boy

like me of nothing but city dissipations, the opera, or how inexpressibly charming this sweet little village is, when in reality they are dying of ennui and home-sickness."

Arthur poured out these impetuous sentences while lighting the lamp on the study-table. As its light flashed over the rich dress, distinguished form but perplexed face of his mother, he burst out into a merry laugh, in which, notwithstanding her desire to maintain her dignity, Mrs. McDonald joined.

"Now, madame, how long are they going to stay?"

"This is the point in the subject especially deserving of discussion, my son. Mrs. Forrester has been for some time anxious to remove Belle from the fashionable school where she is learning nothing, as the studies are so superficial.

"I indicated that the high school here would give her a good substantial education, especially in Latin. Eva is inseparable from her sister, and though her education is finished, she will read here at home."

"Here?"

"Yes, my son. I have, in answer to much

entreaty, consented to entertain them for the remainder of the winter while Mr. and Mrs. Forrester are absent in Europe."

"From envy, malice, from all evil and mischief, good Lord deliver us."

"Arthur, who have you seen this afternoon, or where have you been to make you so unusually cross-grained and satirical?"

He did not answer, but gave an angry thrust at the not very brilliant fire. A moment after he said, with averted face :

"It's a good thing for me that I am going away so soon."

"My greatest motive in consenting to their coming is that they will be company for me after you are gone," she answered, a little tremble in her voice.

"An ample compensation, doubtless," he added, with growing bitterness.

"Arthur!"

"What?"

"Why do you dislike those girls so much?"

"Because they are false, vain and foolish, and I honor above all things in women, sincerity, intellectual depth, and ——"

"When did you ever see these qualities in combination?"

"Notably in the person to whom I am talking," he answered, striding over to her and patting her cheek.

But she repeated, "False, vain! Why, Eva is a member of the church, her mother said."

"So much the more is the church to be pitied for having such representatives. . . But we will dismiss this subject. I'll run up and change my coat, and then come to you and do my best to acquire fortitude to endure the tedium of the evening."

"Wait, Arthur! Here is a note left for you this afternoon," Mrs McDonald called out, as he was disappearing through the door. He took the envelope from her hand and broke the seal, his mother's eye resting on him curiously. A look of mingled perplexity and disappointment crossed his face; then he said, in answer to her silent enquiry:

"This is to remind me of the missionary meeting to-night; I had quite forgotten I promised to go. . . Suppose I invite the girls to accompany me. The novelty of the affair will prove a diversion.

If, however, they choose to remain at home, I will do so too."

"As you please; but who did you promise?"

He hesitated a moment, then answered, frankly:

"Miss Nettie Burton."

Mrs McDonald frowned. "Strange for her to write you about it. May I see it?"

Arthur bowed, and passed her the still open letter. It took but a moment to read it. Returning it, she made one comment:

"It would be sensible for you to follow her counsel; and yet it would be well not to exchange notes too frequently."

With an inclination of her stately head, she walked slowly from the room.

.


The choir were early in their places. Nettie and Kate as usual, together, leaning over and watching the fast-filling church. A gratified look flitted across the former's face, as she observed Arthur McDonald's tall form go up the central aisle, preceding two fashionably dressed young ladies. As he opened the pew door for them to enter, he wheeled round and looked up to the

gallery. As long as his back was towards her, Kate had watched him eagerly—but the moment he turned, her eyes were perversely averted, though she imaginatively knew just the winning, bright kind of smile which would flash back from his face in answer to Nettie's bow.

"See what I missed," she thought, reproachfully. No wonder he thinks I dislike him."

Her eyes rested for a long time on the black hair, tossed into partial disorder by his fingers running through it.

The church was soon crowded, almost uncomfortably—people seated on the pulpit stairs, some even perched on the narrow ledges of the windows. But a hush fell over the assembly as Mr. Ellerton rose to pray. Kate, who did not close her eyes, noticed that Arthur sat upright in the pew, not even a slight, reverential inclination of the head. "I honor him for it too," she thought. "He does not pretend to show reverence he does not feel. What a host of hypocrites there are in the world." Then she turned to look at the bowed head beside her, the attitude expressive of earnest worship, the tight clasp of the fingers under the forehead,



indicative of an earnest grasp of divinely offered help. Then her eye travelled down to where Jack Lockwood sat—his face in profile—with an expression so unlike that which she had often seen it wear.

Her eyes did not wander again until the prayer was finished. In that brief time she was conscious of feeling more dissatisfied than ever before.

It had been a hard day for Kate, and the memory of its turbulent troubles now seemed so opposed to the sweetness and solemnity of the church of God. A nervous headache had haunted her since morning; at school she had failed most signally in her Latin recitations. She had grieved her mother by a most undignified outburst of "temper," had ruined her dear copy of Longfellow by flinging it across the room in a paroxysm of nervous anger; and finally had treated Arthur when he overtook her on the way from school to a perfect storm of raillery and sarcasm, the memory of which made her cheeks burn. He had received it calmly, even laughed at her sallies, and flung back sharp retorts, though all the time she knew they were not spontaneous, in fact

entirely foreign to his mood. She was conscious she hurt his feelings, that he was disappointed and annoyed that she would not talk rationally, nor meet with appreciation his expression of opinion. But her evil genius made her feel not only contradictory but reckless and careless, and the longer she talked, the more involved and entangled her thoughts became. And now feeling thus remorseful, ill and "generally forlorn," (as she would have expressed it), she must face this congregation and sing words in which she had no interest—her enthusiasm not being particularly enlisted in favor of missions.

But this very dissatisfaction with herself gave pathos and beauty to the fine tones of her magnificent voice, a beauty not due to her conception of the sentiment.

There was no hesitation, nor faltering—her nervousness so well concealed that no one imagined its existence. Many in the congregation looked enquiringly at each other, and then involuntarily turned round to the gallery. Nettie saw Arthur McDonald lean his head on his hand, and close his eyes as though the singing gave him mingled sensations of enjoyment and pain.

Then when after a joyous strain from the united chorus, Kate's voice once more swelled out into the *andante* —

“ Lift up, lift up your heart's desires — ”

the passionate entreaty thrown into her tones, brought the tears to many eyes.

At this auspicious moment the venerable missionary arose. Not of profound mental acquirements, perhaps not equal to many present, he yet by means of a burning, earnest zeal, and great magnetism of manner, held the audience spell-bound for over two hours. Beginning with an examination of the various religious systems which have controlled humanity at different epochs of the world's history, he spoke of the four great teachers of morality—Confucius, Buddha, Socrates and Jesus Christ, giving an analysis of their distinctive doctrines and of the moral influence resulting to the world, finally conclusively proving the superiority of Christ and the system which he founded. Then, more in detail, he described the notable features of the religion of India, not concealing its marvellous excellences, nor attempting to enhance its defects. The solution of mixed points in philosophy which it offers

for the consideration of thinkers being worthy of our unreserved admiration; while its messages of pardon for sin and its explanations of an immortal existence, being on the other hand pernicious and misleading.

But his earnestness was not entirely due to the remote heathen. Towards the end of his discourse, he alluded to the fact that there must be many before him, who were as yet as far from God as the far-off worshipper of Brahma. With intense earnestness he urged them to investigate the glorious principles of this greatest, purest, of all religions, the only divine, hence trustworthy, message from God, the compassionate father, to his suffering dying children; he urged them to convince their reason of the truth of these three facts, their own sin and responsibility, God's willingness and power to forgive, and the grand possibility of their now incomplete warped lives becoming at last complete, sphered into beauty and harmony. As he spoke it seemed as though the Spirit of God were visibly present, striving with the hard hearts of those who had so long resisted him.

After a hush and silence most impressive, they

all sang that hymn which has been the prayer of so many sin-stricken hearts yearning for comfort, pardon, the peace which passeth all understanding, the joy which only the Heavenly Father can bestow :

“Just as I am without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou *bid'st* me come to thee.
O Lamb of God, I come.”

But Kate who in the early part of the evening had sung :

“Obey, obey, the command of your Lord,”

had not responded to His voice, calling oh ! so lovingly in the depths of her spirit, nor had she gone to Him to be forgiven.

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“Well, young ladies, how did you enjoy the evening?” asked Arthur, as they walked down the aisle ; the rich dresses and unmistakable city appearance of his companions attracting all eyes, — a condition of things very flattering to their love of display.

“Oh, it was so very odd,” replied Eva. “I

never attended a service so peculiar, so free from form. It was positively charming."

"But how painful it is to see people get so excited," said Belle, languidly. "It made me shiver to hear that old man describe his feelings when he thought of the danger we are in. What right has he to try and terrify us, to appeal to our imaginations instead of——"

"Arthur who is that pretty girl you are smiling at?"

Belle wheeled round at Eva's quick question, and exclaimed, almost too loud:

"How horridly she is dressed; positively no style whatever."

But she was interrupted a second time, and now by Arthur:

"I must congratulate you on your fine taste, especially shown by your staring at her so as to count every identical button on her jacket, and discover, if possible, whether she wears gloves of the most fashionable shape."

He spoke pointedly, but in a low tone. Belle blushed, and glanced around, fearful of eavesdroppers. Clearly she must be careful not to provoke this sharp-tongued cousin.

"But what is her name?" persisted Eva, drawing away her eyes, but not her thoughts from the person who had interested her.

"Her distinguished name is Burton."

"Burton, Burton! Is it Nettie, do you suppose, Belle?"

Belle so far forgot Arthur, as to gaze once more.

"I do believe it is. But how changed! I heard that her father had lost all his money, and that was the reason they so suddenly left the city. But I didn't suppose they were so poor. That is last year's hat."

"Did you know her?" asked Arthur, as he offered his arm at the gate.

"Yes, very well; were often thrown together, though she didn't go out much because she was studying hard. I never liked her. . . ."

But are you well acquainted?"

"Yes; we are sworn friends; and I warn you, Belle, that if I notice you treating her impolitely because she dresses—just think, *dresses* not so richly as you, you shall rest under the ban of my displeasure. Pardon me," Arthur added, think-

ing he had been unnecessarily dogmatic, perhaps rude.

"I never was aware Belle was in the habit of treating people, so," said Eva, coldly, thinking her cousin conceited, fault-finding and discourteous, though she would not have ventured to tell him so.

"My anticipation of such dire consequences is, because I remember how several times she had treated people, she thought inferior to herself. Besides I saw her very expressive glance at Miss Burton a few minutes ago, and I am very sure from the flush on Miss Burton's face that she caught every word. You will not wish to admit the necessity of coming to the country to receive lessons in politeness, but you are so much younger than I, that you must allow me once in a while to dictate. Yet again I ask your pardon."

Arthur, weary of the discussion, said nothing for fully five minutes; then he continued, with an effort at being sociable:

"You will grow tired of our hum-drum life here, I am afraid, Eva. The amusements are very limited. I wonder how it would do to electrify the town by a good party at home, *à la mode*,

invite all the people, thus begin a round of invitations. I must speak to mother."

"Are there many here, who dance?" asked Belle, with interest.

"A few," replied Arthur. "But it would not do to have a dancing party. It would fail to entertain many, and offend the taste of some."

"Not a very *à la mode* party, then.

"I get vexed with the absurd idea that young people must always exercise their heels, and keep their heads useless, whenever they come together. Why can't they enjoy sensible conversation?"

"I say, Arthur, who was that beautiful singer there to-night?" enquired Eva, as he paused.

"Miss Wallace."

"Is she nice?"

"What do you mean by nice? Well-dressed?"

"Oh do stop your nonsense. I mean by nice—well-bred, well educated, refined."

"She is uniformly courteous, but when her opinions are rudely assailed she is very strong in fighting for them. . . Her enthusiasm sometimes blinds her judgment, her sense of the justice of contrary opinion. . . She is very fond of fun; has an unfailing amount of humor always ready for

use. Rather sarcastic when necessary, but only for self-defence. . . About being educated she still attends the high school here (college it might be called, you will see her often Belle), because she loves study and doesn't think herself too old to learn. I understand that she is at the head of every department; intends to graduate this spring. . . I never knew her to leave off her 'h's' or use pronouns the second or third person plural, with singular verb. Nor does she use superlative adjectives, such as frightful, awful, and dreadful except in intentional exaggeration. Some young ladies do, however."

Bell bit her lip's as his grave eye rested on her in implied reproach.

"I don't think the meeting contributed to your good humor," she said, petulantly.

His whole expression changed; almost a weary, disappointed look crossed his face, and his voice lost its sharp sarcastic ring. "You are right. I cannot believe in the utility of the display of so much religious excitement. It annoys and irritates me. I am sorry to witness people's delusions, discontented with their blind superstition. They do not half of them realize the terrible

nature of the truth about which they talk with such tragic eloquence. . . You are a professing Christian, Eva. It must have rejoiced your heart to see the quick effect of it all, the universal emotion displayed."

"Every thing is so different from what I have been accustomed to, that I don't know whether I am glad," she answered, quickly. "I think God's work should be done more quietly and smoothly; and yet there was an influence in that meeting which I felt to be very touching. But here we are at home," she added, relieved from any more detailed communication of her personal feelings.

CHAPTER VI.

MEDITATIONS AFTER THE MEETING.

"Man is not born to solve the problem of the universe, but to find out what he has to do; and to restrain himself within the limits of his comprehension."—*Goethe*.

THE development of Arthur McDonald's mental faculties, had not been perfectly symmetrical. For years inspired with an intense desire for knowledge, it had proved to be knowledge of rather a restricted form, relating more to abstract subjects, than to scientific facts.

Haunted by thoughts and conceptions of spiritual, invisible realities, ever eluding analysis, their constant recurrence but confused and annoyed,

because of his inability to harmonize them, with logical conclusions. For his mental repose, certainty was absolutely necessary; but this discord between convictions, caused much uncertainty, doubt and restless questioning. His childhood's confiding faith in Christ, in the reality of the divine presence, had disappeared; do what he would he could not help viewing it as a fanciful superstition of the past, however beautiful and fair, to be rejected by his maturer judgment. At the present stage of his intellectual development, he felt it impossible to blindly believe doctrines resting merely on authority, or on appeals to his moral and emotional nature. Their evidences and sufficient reasons, had to be completely vindicated, ere they could be accepted as true.

His intellect had matured fast. At sixteen he had graduated from the high school at Belmont, and gone immediately to college. But a distaste for mathematical studies, which there he was compelled to prosecute, to the neglect of the less practical, but to him more fascinating and necessary branch of human knowledge, metaphysics, had induced him at the end of two years to relinquish the prospects of a brilliant college career,

and return home to pursue a course of self-directed study, relating to the obstinate difficulties besetting him, difficulties mainly philosophical, but merging more or less in theology. His perseverance and patience had been indomitable, and yet now, at the age of twenty-one, a satisfactory solution of all these perplexing problems was still in the distance, though in the search he had traversed tracts of thought of which few even succeed in catching glimpses.

His happiest hours had been passed in the little room, which years ago had been given to him for his exclusive possession. Enjoying the incalculable advantages of leisure, freedom from distracting care, and means wherewith to indulge his fine taste for books, his progress had been rapid and enviable, and yet every step had been attended by disappointments — the more bitter because his pride, his sensitiveness, forbade his asking help from those wiser, more experienced than himself. In consequence of his pride also, from his best friends was concealed, to a great extent, his real self. The young face, which in moments of isolation and solitude, was always clouded by gloomy abstraction, thoughts which came unsought; and


however unwelcome, would not be banished, in society was changed into brightness. And this was not owing to wilful deception, the investigation of these deep questions tended to cast his mind in a mould of, if not melancholy, at least serious gravity, yet there existed in his nature an element which responded enthusiastically to joyousness manifested by others. Though but a reflection, not a distinct creation, it was nevertheless true and sincere.

His intellect had matured fast, but not at the expense of his heart. There were in his nature wide sympathies, deep springs of love and tenderness, fine sensibilities to the true, the noble, the beautiful in action and thought. But this love, this tenderness had not brought happiness. Not being bestowed on God, the noblest object of all love and devotion, it was limited to human companionships; and where by any mischance or force of circumstances it proved to be unappreciated or thoughtlessly rejected, it rebounded back to himself, not to make him morbid, but more and more restlessly dissatisfied.

There were several things troubling him tonight as he sat between twelve and one o'clock

in his silent, lonely study, and reviewed the occurrences of the day.

It had been one of his best, most unselfish aims, to do all in his power to smooth the rough places in Nettie Burton's pathway; to if possible, open sublime and glorious vistas to her eager, aspiring gaze; he had indeed inspired her with his sympathy, his unfeigned esteem for her unusual abilities. In fact, her mind was almost a counterpart of his own. The same desire to discover ultimate causes, to investigate enigmatical questions; though the conclusions separately attained were of sufficient diversity to impart zest to discussion. If he could have his will, he would keep from her knowledge anything disturbing to her peace, or a source of annoyance. He prophetically felt that the advent of his cousin Belle into Belmont society, would thus disturb her peace, perhaps cause her many heart-aches. At the time Mr. Burton lost his property, Nettie had been six months at Vassar College. Her reputation for thorough application, and a certain conveyed impression of great force of character, had induced the principal of the Belmont high school to accept



her services as teacher of the primary class in Latin.

On account of the exceedingly useless nature of the studies prosecuted at fashionable ladies' schools, Arthur suspected that Belle would be compelled to enter these classes in Latin, even were she prepared to take higher position in other subjects. In these imaginable relations of teacher and pupil, he anticipated nothing nobler in Belle's treatment of Nettie than scornful contempt, certainly insulting indifference. He knew his cousin too well to expect that she would bear mildly the mortification of being in subordination to one upon whom she looked down and despised.

But this dread for Nettie was not the sole cause for unhappiness to his heart to-night. His thoughts clustering around one still nearer to his own sympathies, his inner self, grew each moment more entangled, perplexed with anxiety and confused suspense.

He and Kate had been close friends from childhood. They had gone to their first school together, an old town-house away on the other side of the river, he always carrying her book and helping her over the bridge. How many tiresome

long summer afternoons they had wandered away into the woods, some story book dear to their childhood hearts, stowed away in his pocket, to be drawn forth under the shades of intertwining boughs of trees, to be pored over again and again, awakening fancies and dreams of life, and destiny of possibilities, perhaps never to be realized, colored by the rose light of their own desires.

Then, with something of a poet's joy, hand in hand they had often stood on the hill-tops, and watched the sun, in silent, impressive majesty, go down to rest amid the flaming western clouds — he and Kate also silent, but feelings indefinite, vague, but very sweet, rushing through their hearts,

In the most daring winter sports she had been his most congenial comrade. Of unflagging energy, unwearied enthusiasm, she had kept up his excitement when, but for external stimulus it would have waned. Then when her cheeks would ache from cold, he would rub them warm again, and hold her little hand in his all the way home.

But now he was merging into manhood, and though in reality unchanged, a perceptible but indefinable barrier, a consciousness of coolness and

change was growing up between them, effectually preventing unrestrained companionship. In place of the frank, loving regard of the old days, she met him now with an unnaturally reserved manner, with forced, or, worse still, sarcastic words, when he longed the most for earnestness. She no longer confided to him her eager hopes, wishes or plans, but at all times assumed tacitly that he cared for nothing but the surface of her thoughts. There was no spontaneity; all was chilling, disappointing indifference.

She did not know how this touched his not unmanly sensitiveness, how it grieved his noble heart. His love for old associations, the clinging tenderness he felt for childhood's friendships, would have been sufficient to have caused grief. But his true strong affection for the impulsive girl—affection unchanged, unchanging, except to grow daily more strong and true, made this grief doubly hard to bear. For a while he had endeavored to persuade himself that she had changed in reality, as well as towards him, that she was actually less loyal, less sincere and warm-hearted than before. But even if his jealous observation of her actions, which, indeed, was a positive con-

tradition of this, could have deceived him, her wonderful singing to-night had revealed depths of tenderness and affection, the existence of which he wondered he could ever have doubted. He realized that she had the same noble characteristics as ever, that she was unchanged save to him. What had he done? If he went to her and asked explanations, she would probably answer laughingly that he was vexing himself unnecessarily, had read too much metaphysics, therefore got nervous, imaginative and melancholy. She had been reading, lately, one of Jack Lockwood's books on nervous diseases—could she not write out a prescription? She would earnestly recommend exclusive attention to Miss Braddon and other writers of the sensational school, interspersed with a simple diet—on the delights of their quondam days—the Arabian Night's Entertainments, or Robinson Crusoe.

Ah! he knew it would be useless to attempt to raise this dark, sombre cloud of estrangement. He had but to wait patiently for the discipline of separation to change its sombre hue into the golden brightness of reconciliation.

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Kate's feelings this evening were of a complex nature. Self-satisfaction and dissatisfaction fought for supremacy in her soul, and it was doubtful on which side victory would be declared.

To offset the disappointment which the whole day had been to her, was the triumph of the evening. She knew she had sung well by the admiring, wondering glances bestowed upon her. Even the good pastor had hastened to her side to express his pleasure, and signify his desire for repetitions. In fact — from Mr. Derwent, whose taste was so fastidious, down to little Bertie, one of her most steadfast admirers — all had been pleased:

"I shall have you do this again; it was superb;" the one had said: and the other, as he stole his hand into hers, under cover of her cloak, "Miss Katie it was lovely; just like the angels."

"Well, I believe I am of some importance, then, after all," she soliloquized, as she tucked each curl in order for the night. "The next thing Mr. Derwent will be urging papa to give me training. I will go to New York for a year or two of study; then in due course of time I shall make my *début* in Steinway Hall, as the celebrated wood songster.

I shall wear a beautiful sky-blue silk, with point lace trimmings, enter with a stage stride amid a perfect storm of applause, bow so gracefully and charmingly, and then begin to warble. In a few minutes my eye will fall on Arthur's eager, listening face. By his side will be sitting his wife—a sweet, dear face, the exact counterpart of Nettie's. With a shriek of pain I shall fall fainting on the stage, to be borne away, amid the groups of countless listeners——

“Oh, how *can* I jest about this matter? and yet if I could not, I believe my heart would break. Kate Wallace how weak and foolish you are!” she added, almost audibly, shaking her head reproachfully at her own white face looking at her in the mirror. Then as a vent for strong excitement, she began pacing the floor restlessly, with her usual firm rapid step—arms thrown behind her and head bent forward. “How hard it is to see Nettie winning his love. I *must* not let Arthur see how hard it is. I know I grieve him. He thinks me heartless, capricious, satirical. But it is better to be misunderstood, than that he should have the pain of knowing how unhappy he makes me. Oh I am so glad he is going away

I believe I have thought of him, when I should be thinking of the things that man urged us to consider, to-night."

The steps became more rapid and restless; the hands locked together in a tight, close clasp.

"I do want to love Christ, but my heart seems so cold and dead and unloving, overgrown with tangled weeds of worldly thoughts. My every hope and plan is centered on this world; how seldom I think of another; it seems as though I must go on living this way all the time. But I do wish I had something like that which inspires and supports Nettie, which gilds with beautiful meaning, her most trivial, and commonplace action."

Kate ceased walking up and down the room, and sat down before the fire, burying her face in the depths of the cushioned chair. The fire-light danced over the bowed head, and lit up the brown hair with a lovely hue. Self-dissatisfaction was evidently gaining ground, and proving disagreeably tenacious.

"Why can't I believe? Why doesn't God give me faith and trust? He must know my difficulty is lack of earnestness. I *can't* be earnest. I am

impressed by what I hear ; long to experience this happiness ; but then my attention is diverted. I see something to excite me, and these impressions, fade and are forgotten. I strive to recall them into existence, but they refuse. The freshness and joy, and never failing interests of life, take away my thoughts from my best and highest interests. To-night it seemed as though I must be changed some way. At one time I felt so solemn, as though everything depended on what I decided to do. And then I looked at that queer hat one of those girls with Arthur, had on. It was so odd ! That minute my mind began conjecturing how many inches it could be placed further back on her head without falling into the next pew, and astonishing Bro. Robinson, who was fast asleep. I forgot the words of the missionary, forgot my desires for a Christian life, until now. . . God must have made me this way, so impressible by every trivial thing, which appeals either to my sense of sympathy or of fun. Oh if this infinite beauty could be revealed to me ! What were Jack's words ? ”

She rose suddenly, went to a drawer, and drew out the note received less than a week ago :

" Thank you, dear Kate. I pray that the Saviour, who above all others has been the cause of this, as I hope, permanent change in my tendencies of life and thought, may reveal his infinite beauty and loveliness to you. Your character is grandly fashioned, but it needs his love to glorify it."

"My character needs a good deal to glorify it," she thought, as she refolded the paper. "The angles are pretty sharp and unfinished, and a good deal of discipline will have to be endured before I am fit to be one of God's children. Yet I don't want to be a member of the church. I won't be, no matter how soon I manage to get converted! I don't want to be watched and criticised and talked about, this act being in harmony with my profession, and that inconsistent. Then some of our church are so narrow-minded and small-hearted. I don't believe I ever could love them, even talk to them, patiently. I hate the very sight of their disagreeable faces. Why can't all people be nice and fascinating?"


Kate's discontented thoughts were stopped by the clock on the mantle-piece striking half-past twelve. Knowing she would be in no condition for school the next day unless she slept, she went

over to the table, opened a book lying upon it, and sat down to compose her mind by reading.

She and Nettie had adopted the plan of reading every day a little, if only a few lines, of Wordsworth's "Excursion." He was Nettie's favorite poet.

To her surprise, Kate opened at the second book. Travelling down the page, her eye caught involuntarily those words which seemed so peculiarly suited to her own condition, and almost a prophecy of the life of the coming months :

'He still retained what he had received from nature,
An intense and glowing mind. . . Yet his moods,
Of pain were keen
And he continued when worse days were come,
To deal about his sparkling eloquence,
Struggling against the strange reverse with zeal
That showed like happiness ; but in despite
Of all this outside bravery, within
He neither felt encouragement or hope
For moral dignity
Was wanting, and reverence for himself, and
Last and best
Confiding thoughts through love and fear of Him
Before whose sight the troubles of this world
Are vain as billows in a tossing sea."



Kate read no further, and soon after was sleeping the sleep which only those in perfect health and who possess the luxury of getting tired, ever enjoy. Once more the voice of conscience had been lulled to rest, those voices of God speaking to the heart of the sinner, which if not listened to, and heeded, gradually grow more faint and few, and soon will be hushed forever.

CHAPTER VII.

ONE DAY IN NETTIE'S LIFE — FAILURES.

"Loyalty to duty, or an inward ideal of high-mindedness, is admirable."— *J. Russell Lowell.*

THE next day was Saturday, to Nettie perhaps the most trying, certainly the most busy, of all. An unusual amount of baking, sweeping and other duties had to be performed, besides a certain taking up of stitches dropped during the week, in order to start fresh for another monotonous round of days. She had awakened with a consciousness of depression and lassitude, which many experience as the reaction from past excitement. The night passed in strange unreal

dreams, which though transient in influence, are peculiarly significant. Towards morning her confused ideas merged into a vision which gathered intensity and vividness because of an apparent connections with actual facts.

She and Mr. Derwent and the missionary were exploring the long corridors and secret recesses of an old medieval castle, when gradually, like the fading of the sunset glow on western clouds, the castle disappeared, and she found herself alone with Kate, wandering in a boundless, dusky wood. The birds were hopping wearily from bough to bough, ready soon to put their heads under their wings and go to sleep, while in the distance could be heard the soft ripple of a brook over the pebbles which composed its bed. Overcome by the quieting, soothing influence of the whole scene, they at last sat down on a green, mossy stump, Kate's head resting in Nettie's lap, her eyes beautiful with that expression of love and trust which few besides Nettie had the privilege of even beholding. How long they sat there could not be determined, for in dreams the life and thoughts of years can be compressed into the space of one short moment. Their rest was

at last rudely broken by Dr. Lockwood, who appeared suddenly before them, his face white with terror. In response to their question he exclaimed breathlessly :

“ Oh come quickly ! not far away is Arthur underneath an overhanging rock. He sits there serenely, oblivious of danger ; but every one above him can see that the boulder is gradually loosening, and threatens to fall every instant, and crush him to atoms. I dare not warn him, for he has no confidence in me, and would not heed. Oh come quickly ! ”

Almost before the words had been uttered, Kate was on her feet, and calling back :

“ I will either save him or perish with him,” she plunged into the forest.

The next moment a terrible noise of cracking trees and falling rocks was heard, and almost instantaneously, Nettie with a nervous start, awoke to see that Sarah had just closed the window, and was dressing by the light of the half-smoking lamp. The room looked so cold and comfortless, she felt almost sorry she had not slept on ; but then assailed by a twinge of conscience, she sprang heroically out of bed, saying :

"You should have roused me, Sarah. It's my turn to get breakfast."

The elder sister often annulled the excellence of her own self-denial by an assumption of wilful selfishness on the part of others:

"I should think you *would* want to keep the rules," she said, implying the contrary wish in Nettie's unintentional action.

The tone of her voice was exceedingly unpleasant. It did not require much effort to imitate it, even intensify its unpleasantness in Nettie's reply:

"If you were awake, I am sure it would have been an easy thing just to speak to me. You are perfectly aware that I do not wish to leave more for you to do than is your share."

"I didn't say you did. There! you needn't look so aggrieved. You're so sensitive you can't bear a word."

Nettie bit her lips and this time did not respond. Hurrying in spite of numb fingers and a disconsolate miserable feeling in her heart, she managed to be the first to reach the kitchen. Somehow the fire would not burn, she poked and blew

and fussed over it, till her cheeks were flushed and her eyes ached with the smoke. This delayed breakfast unavoidably, and to complete her vexation and disgust her father coming through on his way to the woodshed, said benignly:

"Have breakfast soon, Pussie. It's later than usual, and I am in a hurry."

It was not very long before Sarah made her appearance, but not until her offered assistance was rendered unnecessary. Because older, and of course on that account wiser, she considered it her prerogative to criticize and direct Nettie in her work, when such criticisms were superfluous, even unwelcome. Ignorant how nervous her scrutiny made her sister, she stood shivering over the stove about ten minutes, observing everything, in an idle but very provoking way. Nettie did not show her impatience as Kate would have done—a quick hot explosion to be followed by a clearer atmosphere. The effort to be controlled, made the tone of her voice constrained and cold.

"Are you getting this breakfast or am I?"

At such times of disagreement, Sarah had the exasperating habit of always meeting such words

from Nettie with open-eyed surprise and bewilderment as though their cause baffled her comprehension.

Nettie had seized the frying-pan forgetful that its heat would burn her fingers, and Sarah after noting her furrowed forehead and lips tightly compressed with pain, said slowly, as though the cause of it all had at last occurred to her mind :

"Pon my word, you must have got out of the wrong side of the bed this morning."

"If I did, it was your fault."

"*My* fault! How?"

"Oh you wouldn't understand if I told you. Dish that oatmeal, instead of looking at me."

And all the time the consciousness she was acting unworthily and without dignity, rather added to her impatience than checked it—she had herself to oppose as well as Sarah. It seemed so easy to go on with this same way of speaking, so hard to remember a harmonious, pleasant way of speaking. Fortunately for her reputation for filial respect, Mrs. Burton did not appear.

Just as the coffee was boiling, and she was lifting the potatoes from the stove, Walter rushed into the kitchen dragging by its tail the little

dog Dr. Dent had given him only two days before:

"For shame Walter, what's he done?" asked Sarah.

"Done! I should think so! Why, he's gone and tore Net's book and chewed it, and dragged it around and out into the woodshed, and here is half of it."

A dark flush mounted to Nettie's forehead, as her eye recognized in the torn, mangled leaves in Walter's hand the dear cherished copy of Wordsworth—the duplicate of Kate's—both presents from Arthur, the previous Christmas. The flush receded, leaving her face very pale. This present sense of outrage and loss, in addition to past grievances, was so keen that seldom had she shown in the presence of her brother, such anger. It cut like cold steel. In dread the dog slunk away behind the stove. Sarah looked on bewildered, and confused, and Walter who listened in astonishment, which almost took away fear, was still further astonished by a stinging box on the ear, which roused his boyish resentment.

"Stop that, Net. I won't stand that"

Almost at the same moment a voice behind her said, reproachfully :

"Nettie, what does this mean?"

She turned round, the flush again appearing in her cheeks.

"He promised if we would let him keep the dog, that he would have him securely locked up, for he is so mischievous. You see how careful of his promise he has been. He left the doors open, and Dash got into my room, and seized this off my table."

She pointed indignantly towards the ruined book lying on the floor, then a feeling of miserable disappointment proved stronger than indignation. Sitting down by the table she buried her face in her hands, and burst into an uncontrollable passion of tears.

"Oh Nettie, I am so sorry!" said Walter. A choking sensation in his throat made the words come hard, "It was mean in me. Yesterday I hitched him up for Frank to play horse, and then Will Wallace came for me, and I forgot to lock him up — and he — oh dear."

"It was indeed careless, my son," said Mr. Burton "and Nettie has reason to be vexed, but

my daughter," and he tried to lift the carefully concealed face, "I am surprised to see you condescend to strike your brother. You must apologize for the indignity, inasmuch as he has expressed his sorrow."

Silence.

"Did you hear me, Nettie?" Mr. Burton asked, after a long pause.

"Yes" —

"I am waiting for you to obey."

"I shall *not* apologize until I feel it necessary, father."

The firm decisive tone of the voice convinced him it was useless to force will, and as Sarah had by this time deposited the coffee on the table, and rung the bell, he adjourned to the dining-room.

The day thus begun in gloom, did not promise to have a fine sunset. Every one seemed cross, discontented and miserable. There was so much to be done, and so little apparent physical strength with which to work. Nettie's head ached from the not soon quelled storm of passion, but the ache of her heart all day was far sharper, more painful. Of what value were now the fine resolu-

tions, the earnest plans for renewed consecration to Christ she had cherished the previous evening?

What if Kate, whom she so longed to influence by the power of her nobility, and Christian dignity, had observed the sad occurrences this morning? What opinion would she form? But Walter had witnessed just what she was glad Kate had missed. What did he think of the power of religion to reform the character, and neutralize natural tendencies? It was in vain to plead excuse for her action, to reason with her conscience, that her provocation justified the free display of indignation, that Walter should suffer for his carelessness, that any one in similar circumstances would have used words not less severe and unkind. The magnitude of his guilt did not take away from the magnitude of hers. One person's sin is not another's — the grand conquest is, to stand upright, while others fall, to resist successfully, while others ignobly yield. Therefore, as the long, busy, miserable day drew to an end, it found Nettie very contrite and penitent, and still too proud to express her feelings to either Walter or Sarah.

She had just gone up-stairs about five o'clock

and for the first time sat down to rest, when as she looked out into the street, she saw a sleigh passing the house swiftly. The bells tinkled merrily, the horses tossed their heads proudly. A feeling of homesickness, almost of envy, a sense of injustice for a moment, took possession of Nettie's heart. How gay and happy both Belle and Eva looked, how elegant in their seal-skin jackets and caps; while she, with no pleased eye, glanced at the large brown apron enveloping her plain dress, the wrists, once surrounded by white pure lace, now unadorned even by linen cuffs. Arthur had not glanced up at the house, and as she noticed his bright intellectual face bent towards Eva, a barrier seemed to rise between her dearly loved friend and herself.

"She will inevitably prejudice him," was her swift thought. "After a few weeks under her tuition, he will grow worldly-minded, less noble, disinterested and unselfish. Oh I wish I had not seen them!"

Then, as to allay her fears, her eye lighted on the shattered book lying near. The fly-leaf was loose, and was part torn away, but still was

plainly visible the words he had written in his fine student-like hand :

“TO NETTIE BURTON,
In commemoration of a bright and happy year.
From her friend, ARTHUR McDONALD.”

Then underneath was a quotation from Froude :

“The address of poetry, as of history, is less to the understanding, than to the higher emotions. We learn in it to sympathize with what is great and good ; we learn to hate what is base. In the anomalies of fortune we learn the mystery of our mortal existence ; and in the companionship of illustrious natures, we escape from the littlenesses which cling to the round of common life ; and our minds are turned in a higher and nobler key.”

“Oh, it is indeed so,” she said to herself, all the dark envious thoughts of the previous moment vanishing away. What reason have I to be lonely, when I can have this companionship of literary kings and queens, and in their princely presence to forever live?”

She heard a step behind her and turning around she saw Walter, standing looking wofully at the ruined book. For a moment she was silent, then

pride was overmastered by penitence. Starting up hastily, she laid her hand on his shoulder and said, in a trembling voice :

“Forgive me for scolding you, dearie — no wonder you thought I was a perfect bear. I couldn’t help feeling badly, but I ought not to have been so unmindful of your feelings.”

How easily the words came when she had overcome her diffidence in commencing — and she used words quite different from any of the apologies her imagination had framed during the day.

Though his sister’s anger had rankled in Walter’s heart all day, and spoiled the Saturday’s sports, it was excessively awkward to stand there and have his forgiveness solicited. He fumbled with his cap a second or two, looked as though he would love to run away, then impulsively threw his arms around her neck and burst into tears :

“Oh Nettie it was awful to see you look so ! You never looked so white and angry before. I felt awful, (bother take it, I don’t see why I need cry.) I felt — Oh, Nettie, I love you — do forgive me.”

Then as he succeeded in driving back the tears, he continued :

"I gave Dash to the old doctor again, I'll save my money —"

"No Walter, nothing you could buy would take the place of this unsightly book. Very dear memories cluster around every page. Instead of burning it, I will keep it as a memorial of our reconciliation. Shall I? It must teach us to be more careful of each other's treasures, but most important, teach us to refrain from speaking words we can never recall — words unworthy of our close, affectionate relationship. And Walter," her voice grew almost inaudible with suppressed feeling, "and Walter, you must not let my sins and failures ever come between you and your duty to the Saviour. Don't look at me to judge whether it is well to be a Christian. I am a poor incomplete representation of one. It is not because he is unlovely, or his religion not beautiful. It is because I do not depend on his grace to make my life lovely and beautiful, or his strength to counterbalance my weakness. Did you ever think of loving him with your whole heart, Walter?"

The question was put diffidently, and yet afterwards Nettie wondered why she had waited so long before asking it. In suspense she waited for

his reply. With boyish reticence it was long delayed, but at last it came:

"Last night I felt mean, I can tell you. That man's speech hurt me somewhere — but I didn't know what made it. I somehow felt afraid to go to sleep. It was so dark, and I felt that God didn't love me."


"Oh he does love you, so much!"

"Well, I didn't think he did. But I thought and thought about what that missionary said, and I felt worse and worse. I felt so cheap, somehow. You know how it is. But at last I went to sleep and this morning I was all right."

"How all right?" asked Nettie, gently.

"Why, just the same. I went—I mean the same as at other times—I went and got Dash, and we had a good romp, and then I found that plaguey book."

"I wouldn't say that word, dear. However to come back, you felt as though your sin shut away from you God's love and compassion? On the contrary, his love is the more manifest in our darkest, deepest guilt. Because of our need, because we are just so sinful, God sent Jesus to show his love to us. And what he wants us to



do is to be sorry for the wrong we have done, to believe that he can, that he will forgive every thing."

"But I am so small, some way, and he so great. Why just think, Nettie, how great he must be."

"So much the more exquisitely beautiful is his condescension towards us."

"How do I know he will forgive me?"

"Do you think I have forgiven you for being the cause of the loss of my book?"

"Yes."


"Why?"

"Why, because you said so, and you act so, too, else you wouldn't have kissed me so."

"Well, why cannot you have the same faith in Jesus, that you have in me? He says he will forgive you, if you ask him. You didn't know I forgave you, until you came to me, and found out. I suppose that all day you have been imagining that I have felt angry towards you, whereas, soon after breakfast my anger entirely disappeared, and I only longed to show you my changed feelings; yet I felt that some action from you was necessary to give me confidence. How Jesus longs to have you go and ask his

forgiveness. He is just waiting to let you see how much he loves you, how willing he is to help you in everything. It is such a simple thing — this coming to Christ, which many make so difficult. You don't doubt me because I tell you I love you, and here in the Bible he is continually telling us the same sweet truth, which we continually doubt. How it must grieve him to be so distrusted — his tenderness and compassion to be so questioned! Don't Walter, don't doubt him any longer."

She raised his head from her lap, and scrutinized his face. At first his eyes were lowered, then almost timidly he raised them, and met hers. Though he said nothing, she intuitively knew that then and there her most earnest hopes in regard to him would be realized, that he had resolved to give his heart with its boyish impulses and affections, to the service of his Redeemer, that henceforth brother and sister could walk hand in hand together up the hills of life — the chosen pathway indeed, leading through gloomy valleys and over rugged, footsore places, but reaching at last the highest summit, gilded by the never failing sunlight of God.



CHAPTER VIII.

SATURDAY EVENING.

"Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary." — *Shelley*.

IT was evening. The little sitting-room looked cosy and pleasant to Nettie's eyes as she lay on the sofa a few minutes after tea. Mr. Burton sat in an old-fashioned easy-chair on the right of the table, reading the *Evening Courier*. As her eyes travelled over the finely proportioned head, the black hair turning fast to gray, the refined delicate profile of his face, Nettie felt how much she loved her father, how much she desired to resemble him in character as people said she did

in appearance. At his left hand sat Sarah, busily engaged with a huge basket of stockings, whose holes it was her turn to investigate. Placidity rather than strength, the tranquil peace which results from the efforts of others rather than from desperate, personal conflict, rested on her serene face. There were few points of sympathy between the sisters. The mind of one was cast in a coarser, withal, narrower mould, than that of the other. Nettie's almost mystical mode of thought, her capacity for poetically idealizing life, affection, religion, lay far beyond the grasp of Sarah's matter-of-fact, unimaginative mind — neither could she sympathize with those aspirations for more complete spiritual and intellectual development, which were the ruling motive and stimulus of Nettie's persistent effort. Her's was the disposition to rest contented with whatever culture her condition afforded, without striving nobly for greater results. She was happy — probably happier than Nettie, but it was the happiness of ignorance, not the noble self-discontent caused by perception — of wonderful perception — not easily attained.

On the other side of the table sat Walter, his

hand buried in his thick hair, his brow knotted curiously, as he pored over his school-books, preparing his Monday's lessons. The mind of the tired girl on the sofa was busy with many hopes and plans relative to his future, as she lay there thinking. He had always shown a moderate degree of fondness for books. Unlike Nettie, in having a taste for physical science, he yet resembled her in a habit of steady application — the necessary foundation of all progress. The success of his career had always been of peculiar attraction to her, and her aim had ever been to inspire and guide him towards the highest objects.

No one but God knew the pure happiness of the girl's heart to-night. When discouraged and depressed because of her own failures, he had granted one of her most absorbing wishes — had given her the joy of determining Walter's decision in regard to the religion of Christ. She knew that though careless, reckless, as many boys are, her brother's heart was affectionate and sincere, hence she did not anticipate any lack of earnestness in the new life before him.

Her thoughts away in the far future, present things were for a time forgotten. It was not until

she heard a well-known voice behind her that she realized that she had been dimly conscious of sleigh-bells in the street, and the quiet opening and shutting of the front door.

"Good-evening, Miss Nettie. Do you not feel well?"

"Only tired, she answered, flushing slightly as she rose. "You must pardon my laziness. I didn't hear your ring."

"No. Your mother was in the hall, and hearing me drive up, she fortunately saved me that trouble," Arthur said, pulling off his glove and running his fingers through his hair. "It's a glorious moonlight night. I came to see if you would like a sleigh-ride. Come! It will give you some roses. You are very pale."

"Papa, shall I go?"

Mr. Burton glanced up from his paper;

"Go where? Oh, good evening, Arthur. Yes, child, but wrap up warm."

In but a few minutes, she was snugly deposited in the sleigh, with the warm fur robes wrapped closely about her. As Arthur seized the reins, the horses, as if anxious to show their speed,



"Not until she heard at her elbow Arthur's voice, did her usual manner come back"—Page 103.

sprang impatiently away, and soon the houses of the town were left far behind.

It was almost as bright as day. The icy evergreens on the side of the road threw back the moon's rays in dazzling brilliancy, and the snow sparkled like a floor of diamonds. The clear, frosty air, the rapid rate they were travelling, and the influences of the sublime scenery completed the transformation of Nettie's feelings. In this joyous girl one would hardly have recognized a resemblance to the weary-hearted, discouraged being of the morning.

At last at the bottom of a high steep hill, their speed slackened, and she and Arthur had a chance to keep up a more coherent strain of talk.

"Of what were you thinking as you lay there on the sofa?" he asked. "I stood at the door a second or two, and tried to guess. You were in one of those deep abstractions, in the indulgence of which, I sympathize with you. I know you were not aware of my entrance."

"Let me see, that moment. Oh! I was trying to project myself into the future, years hence... But O Arthur, how gloriously beautiful the night is! So still and solitary."

"I believe that you have a poet's love of solitude, Nettie. You have often spoken of it, as though it appealed to some want in your nature."

"I think it is in moments of isolation, from the stir and agitation of common life that we seem to get the nearest to the Infinite Father; we almost attain to a conception of his most majestic attributes. It is when we return to our human habitations that this firm conviction of infinity is disturbed and we affirm that those things alone exist which we can grasp by our senses, or reason about."

"Oh if I had your faith! The beauty of nature is positive pain to me. I am impressed by some invisible presence, influenced by it, and yet it is so unreal."

"That is just what I said. Because this presence, this manifestation to your spirit of the divine, is not tangible, palpable to sight and touch, you doubt its existence. I fear Arthur you will always wish for faith if——but we will try to banish perplexities and doubts to-night—let us not obtrude them upon——"

"I fear that would be impossible," interrupted Arthur. "There are two things about which I

wish to speak this evening, things which cause me regret, almost pain. They relate to you and Kate."

She looked up into his face as he paused, surprised at its sudden change. It was careworn and anxious.

"Tell me everything, Arthur."

"Which shall be first, you or Kate?"

"Kate by all means, always first, with both of us. Shall it not be so, Arthur?"

"Yes," he answered, briefly. "Are you quite warm? This turn in the road brings the wind in our faces. "Pardon me," he added, as he wrapped her cloud more tightly round her neck, and tucked in the robes over her feet.

"I am not persuaded that I do right in expressing my difficulties, but I do so want counsel—yes, and encouragement, that I am going to burden you with what troubles me. . . Nettie, Kate is changed towards me. I cannot imagine the reason. About three months ago I first noticed it, and lately it has increased perceptibly. Can any facts of which you are aware, explain this?"

He turned his face away, and waited for an answer.

"I had no conception of anything of the kind, Arthur. It has not been evident to me ; she always speaks of you in the same way she ever did, though I acknowledge she *never* mentions you unless I broach the subject first, which I assure you is not seldom. What are the symptoms?"

"Unexplainable, by words. They must be seen and felt, to be realized."

The sadness of his voice touched her :

"What can I do to help you?"

"Nothing, since you are not aware of the symptoms as you express yourself. I ought not to have mentioned it."

"You are wrong, there. You know I consider burdens imposed by friendly confidence, precious, instead of irksome."

"I feel so perplexed that even at the risk of appearing unmanly, I—there is no one in the wide world I would be willing to——"

He stopped suddenly, and Nettie asked :

"I suppose it would not do for me to ask Kate?"

"No! no! There is a grain of willfulness in her composition, and I fancy she would wax worse."

"And yet she does not intentionally wish to grieve her friends. I think she is often misunderstood. Her tendency to look at things brightly, is often imputed to a lack of heart."

"Be assured, I give her due credit for the finest heart qualities. I do not think you can love her better than I."

The controlled feeling in his voice, the earnestness, was an unexpected revelation to Nettie. For a full minute she could find no words to utter then she said, hesitatingly:

"Is it really so Arthur! You love her?"

"Yes, from my very boyhood, though not till last night did I realize to what extent. I realize the preciousness of her friendship now it is receding out of my life, as I did not before."

"Arthur, I know that you will understand that I want to help you; I know you will pardon my saying that perhaps she suspects your love, and it is unwelcome to her."

At that moment the horses started down the hill; not until they were on level ground could Arthur slacken their pace so he could speak:

"That is my solution of the puzzle, Nettie; that was the reason I asked you. Certainty, even

if unfavorable, would be more supportable than this doubt."

"Why don't you go to her?"

"I know how she would meet me. With jests and merriment, which I could not endure. The questions necessary for explanation, could not possibly be asked consistently, or appropriately. I shall have to wait. My dread is, that Jack Lockwood, the only fellow in town worthy of her, may, during my absence, get the blessing for which I long. I hope not."

Arthur noticed the slight shrinking of Nettie's figure into the corner of the sleigh, an involuntary compression of her lips, but he did not know of the echoing thought in her mind:

"I hope, Oh! I hope not!"

She only said aloud:

"I never associated them together."

Arthur made an effort to smile:

"You know anxious hearts are suspicious and jealous. He goes there a great deal, Sundays, especially." Then subsiding into gravity again, he added, "Did you ever see her manifest any unusual preference for—for me?"

Even to raise his hopes, the truthful Nettie could give him but this answer :

“Really Arthur, I never noticed it.”

The next moment he turned the horses' heads homewards, and for a mile or two allowed them to go at a breathless speed. Then he pulled them up, and once more spoke :

“The other person that troubles me is you — you who usually are the one to help me in any trouble. You know your skill on the organ, indicates genius. It is hard that its development should be prevented by the want of a few paltry dollars. Is it not a striking instance of buried talents, about which ministers preach so much? Let me tell you my plan. I am intimately acquainted with a German professor in Woodbridge. He was a close friend of my father's. One of the churches there wants an organist of his recommendation. I have spoken of you to him, and he is anxious to hear you play. If you meet his approbation, Nettie — I am talking business language, am I not? — they will give you a salary of three hundred a year; and if you will accept the shelter of his home, he would be pleased to have you study with him, both music and litera-

ture, especially German. You know how you long for an insight into the language? I can sincerely praise the home he would offer you — and he is a dear old man — one of those poetical souls with refined delicate perceptions. Now what do you say? Mr. Rossbach is coming to stay a day or two with me next week, and if you would consent to show off before him, you would give me so much pleasure.”

“Oh Arthur, you are so thoughtful and kind! I can never express my obligations ——”

Nettie broke off suddenly, then after a long pause, she said, gravely:

“The formation of a definite decision must be postponed until I consult my father. The only question which would stand in the way is, would I be justified in leaving too much work for those at home?”

“Why you could spare enough (see how domestic my knowledge) from your salary, to keep a servant.”

“I think not. My board and payment for lessons would absorb it all.”

Arthur bit his lips. He disliked to be obliged to explain:

"Mr. Rossbach would not consent to receive remuneration."

"Then I could not possibly consent to put myself under such obligation. It would be unpleasant and irksome to me. Entirely impossible."

Nettie knew the obligation would actually be to Arthur himself, but conveniently she could let him know her opinion under cover of Mr. Rossbach's name, and thus avoid paining him by a direct refusal.

"I do not see how you could not be contented."

"Change places, Arthur. Suppose you were poor, and Mr. Rossbach, out of the charity of his heart, you having no claims of relationship or of service upon him, should offer to pay your lawyer's fees, give you money to pursue your studies, etc.—would you accept, or work your own way, even if by doing so, you missed many advantages, much culture, but gained self-respect, independence and well-earned happiness?"

"Oh Nettie, you know I would choose the latter course, though in saying this, I am conscious of cutting off the nose of my plan."

"What a metaphor! . . Then why should a

woman be less independent? Really, I could not gratify you. Forgive my obstinacy."

"But just see how little time you have at home. Your mornings taken up with that exasperating Latin class, then all day engaged with an everlasting round of humdrum household work; your evenings likely to be interrupted by visitors, like me, for instance, of family calls upon your attention; or you are too tired to study."

"I know it, Arthur," she answered sadly, as he paused in his vehement expostulation. "But if I go, there is all which I do now left for mother and Sarah. I would have been away before this if it had not been for them. The former is not very strong. We are quite anxious about those hard headaches which assail her. She takes in sewing from the neighbors — hence if I went she would have to relinquish that, because Sarah could not possibly manage alone the work of the house. As I consider everything, it seems as though the home-ties were bound so tight that I could not slip them off, even to gain such precious freedom as you propose. But I will be ruled by papa's judgment. If he thinks I am selfishly proud,

unnecessarily independent, I will go and become a candidate for Mr. Rossbach's approval."

"I was afraid you would be incorrigible," Arthur said, as the horses stopped at her door, and he jumped out.

"Arthur do not think for one moment that I do not appreciate your kindness. I do so much. Won't you come in?"

"No thank you, not to-night. I don't want the horses to stand. Besides I've got some reading to do, from which those stupid girls inveigled me this afternoon. By the way why did you never tell me you were acquainted with them? They recognized you last night."

"How long do they visit you?"

"That is the horror of the tale. I do not thank my mother for imposing their presence on me all winter. I intend on that account to leave home sooner than I expected. But you mustn't stand there in the cold. Good-night."

Lifting his cap he took up the reins, and was soon out of sight down the moonlit road.

CHAPTER IX.

KATE'S LETTER.

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God."

— *II. Cor. iii. v. (5)*

THE weeks flew by; Christmas came and went and still the good influences of the missionary meeting remained in the hearts of the people; deepening their spiritual convictions and intensifying their desires, which otherwise might have been concentrated on unworthy objects.

The pastor's heart had been filled with an almost oppressive longing for what is usually termed a "revival;" hence he strove with all the strength of his intellect, all the winning persuasion of

which he was capable, to make his words efficacious and potent.

As he preached, the earnestness of his manner, his perceptible faith in the power of the spirit of God, drew the aspirations of his people upward. They almost caught sensible glimpses of unseen glories; heaven and its happiness seemed very near and real; in comparison, earth's disappointments and evils appeared for a time remote, almost forgotten.

He had his wish. Solemnity and earnestness took the place of former indifference. His church services were thronged with those seeking light on the pathway which leads to the cross of Christ. And so it came to pass that not only Walter Burton, but Will Wallace, and Mary Ashworth, and many other young people, and even Dr. Dent and old Mrs. Percival, resolved to become "Soldiers of Christ." With a true fighting spirit, they assumed vows to contend against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness; not unassisted or alone, but accompanied by their Divine Leader, who has omnipotent strength to conquer and subdue. They had not one common battle-field nor foe—what opposed

one did not another — each had temptations, obstacles to his advancement, peculiar to himself.

Walter and Will's battle-field was school-life — that arena for the meeting of so many adverse opinions, the moral code of which not seldom conflicts with the higher mode of Christian morality.

Mrs. Percival had to struggle with narrow-minded tendencies for the ignoble actions of life; it was hard and unnatural to rise to a higher, nobler plane.

Old Dr. Dent had much worldliness, pride, dogmatism in his composition; and though with a desire to live a true loving life, he found the force of habit strong, and the warfare, prolonged, hard, and often unsuccessful.

Of necessity, Kate was brought into immediate and direct relation with these subjects dominant in almost all minds. She witnessed the unusual solemnity and joy with aching heart, but so successfully did she conceal her inmost feelings and thoughts, that few imagined her aught but the same careless, reckless girl.

Even Nettie, rejoicing in new-found truths,

which cast fresher, brighter light, on life's duties and services, could not drive away a sense of deficiency in their friendship, a feeling of keen disappointment at Kate's apparent indifference. Unable to longer wait patiently in the midst of this uncertainty, she at last wrote, asking Kate's unreserved and sincere opinion about these great facts of religion which were agitating so many hearts. In response, as they bade each other good-bye at the church door, one Sunday night, Kate put in her hands a neatly folded packet, with the characteristic words:

"Here is the fruit of impulse! I stayed away from Sunday-school this afternoon to write it—for positively I have so little time to myself—just see what wickedness you have been the cause of my committing. You have *reason* to look startled for I assure you that it is not the first time. I suppose ten minutes hence I shall wish to have that letter in my hands again. Take it quick," and with a laughing good-night, she grasped her younger brother's arm, and hurried away.


Nettie waited till the little sitting-room was vacant, and then, after throwing a stick of wood

on the dying fire, she drew from her pocket the precious letter and began to read :

“ Oh, my darling, before I answer your questions I want to tell you how much I love you ; how dear you are to me ; and to express how keenly I feel my own inability to satisfy you, to give you in return what you give me. . . If some of our masculine cynics could be auditors of some of my outbursts, how their finely chiselled lips would curl, as they muttered scornfully, ‘ Girls’ friendship, sweet and pure for a time, but fleeting and evanescent as snowflakes.’ But I trust you so implicitly, withal, have such faith in my own constancy and permanency of affection, that I do not vex myself with these unworthy doubts of our friendship. But promise me, Nettie, that whatever happens, even if you imagine I am changed (and circumstances tend but too surely to change me), promise that you will still believe in me — believe that I always loved you, can never cease loving you — how much you can never know.

“ And now I wish you to understand that I do not blame you for your ‘ silence’. It was your best weapon to conquer my prejudices against religious cant and misplaced enthusiasm. And yet I acknowledge that if you had spoken before, it would perhaps have done me no harm, because anything which *you* would say could not strengthen these same unreasonable prejudices — your lightest most commonplace word always to me bears the impress of sincerity.

“ Do not think me careless about this great subject of my salvation — do not think I do not realize its impor-



tance; rather think of me as one who earnestly longs for a blessing which she does not know how to obtain; who strives to reach a point in life which seems further and further away in the distance, the more steps he takes towards it.

"I do love the Saviour; I believe he is transcendently worthy of my highest adoration and reverence. But I do not love or reverence him enough to call myself a Christian. Moreover, in order to be a Christian, one must be penitent, sorry for sin, and the fact is, I am neither humble nor penitent. To use your style of language, I predicate of human nature tendencies towards evil, which if not held in check by the determining power of human will, eventually lead to terrible results. But I do not think that constitutional, hereditary defects, such as a quick, excitable temperament, make me the reprobate that some say they think themselves. I do try to conquer my defects. Really I fancy that in some degree I am succeeding in my endeavors.

"But I know I am not in a 'repentant state' yet; I grieve and worry over the harm I do — hate myself, temporarily, for expressing the hasty words which hurt the feelings of those I love; but this regret is more because of the perceptible result, sensible to my consciousness, than because I sin against God. How seldom in fact does this occur to me! I tell you all this frankly, wishing to keep from you no unwelcome truth in regard to myself. And yet, Nettie, I do long to experience this happiness which is so much praised by Christian people. I am conscious of a want of direction to my life course — no great or glorious principle

ruling my action. If this could be given by Christ, I would gladly go to him, and ask him for it. But I don't know how to do it. I am in a puzzle; indecision, pride, desire for better things, and yet contentment with present condition, strive for mastery in my heart. I do not know how it will end.

"I need not tell you that I have been impressed with the change in Cousin Mary. You know from her childhood she has been more or less of an invalid, hence despondent and melancholy; and been so petted and indulged by Uncle Ashworth that the rank weeds of selfishness and exacting vanity have grown side by side in her heart with flowers of exceeding beauty. Now she is really trying to be less selfish, less sensitive; appears in fact, quite happy. (You see our whole family are now Christians, only poor wicked me, left out in the cold.)

"As usual, these impressions will lose freshness, and pass away, as all my religious impressions do. I can't get more earnest; I cannot become a Christian because I have neither sufficient faith, love, nor penitence towards Christ. When he gives me these, I shall be able to rejoice.

"Now do not, I beseech you, be troubled about me. I do believe I am as happy this very minute, as you are, my darling; I have not this terrible incubus of responsibility and anxiety for others weighing upon me, anxiety which Christianity entails.

"I will write no more; except this. Do not vex yourself with fears that your fancied inconsistencies prevent me from 'doing my duty,' as Bro. Robinson would say. If

all the Christian world were like you, the church would not be the powerless institution it is at the present time. You have ever been the cause of my most earnest desires for a better life: your patience, sweetness and charity, have always been a silent example; a restraint upon my sometimes uncontrollable impulses; an aspiration towards that which is greatest and best.

"With you, I would indeed be glad to cast aside this reserve in regard to this subject; reserve which is 'unworthy of us.' Rather say it is so sacred that we do not wish to treat it other than reverently; as the old Jews regarded their Holy of Holies.

"And yet we have often talked of great objects of thought, fine poetry, or exquisite poetical ideas, until we have almost been poets. Carlyle would indeed call us such. These do not seem to have been degraded by our profane discussions; they have, instead, elevated *us* above the narrow and restricted range of our daily life. Why not, then, so talk of Christ; not to bring him down to us, but to endeavor to raise ourselves up to him.

"Perhaps you can help me in my difficulties the same way as Arthur says you help him. I have often wished you would talk to me, as you do to him. I know it has been *my* whole fault, however.

"It is getting dark, and soon will be time to go to church, so I must stop writing, Oh, my darling, what would I do without you? Thank you very much for your kind words. They have done me more good than I expect words from me will ever do you.

"I know I disappoint you. You cannot understand the cause of my fitful, capricious moods; the contradictions, the restlessness.

"But never let your confidence in my sincerity be shaken, Nettie. I have thought very seriously and deeply about your questions ever since you wrote me; perhaps on that account my answer has been delayed.

"Your own

KATE."

CHAPTER X.

A GLIMPSE INTO THE PAST.

"He who hath most of heart,
Knows most of sorrow."— *Bailey's Festus.*


WE know already against what John Lockwood had to fight; we know something of his weakness and the strength of temptation. Many of his best hours were consumed in wearisome conflict, when he would have liked to have progressed in the study of his profession; and at such times he realized how important it is to keep from binding even one single, slight thread of habit around one's soul—for gradually the threads increase, each one stronger and thicker

than the last, till finally they all commingle into a mighty chain, not to be broken, except at the expense of manly strength, many discouragements and much sorrow.

Even the visits for Dr. Dent, in themselves a welcome variety in the general monotony of theoretic study, proved often to be a subtle and hard-to-be-resisted temptation. When lady patients hospitably urged him to take a glass of wine with them, it seemed weak, perhaps discourteous, to so persistently refuse.

Amid all this perplexity and conflict he had to endure the pain of estrangement from his friend. He could not regard Arthur as either fickle or insincere — some unknown or sufficient cause must exist for the so perceptible change in their relations. Many times he recalled their last unrestrained talk together — just after his terrible experience at the “Star and Garter,” as being the sole explanation, and yet it did not seem possible.

He had been away from Dr. Dent’s a whole week, each day the witness of excesses more foolish and sinful than before. At last, having been compelled to remain at the tavern three whole days, too ill to move, he had gone home to his



boarding-house, disgusted, heart-sick, hopeless. It was nine o'clock in the evening. Unable to fix his mind on an abstruse treatise on the symptoms of nervous disease, he heard with delight Arthur's well-known step bounding up the stairs, and the next moment his quick knock.

"Where in the world have you been, Jack?" he asked, as he looked around for a seat.

"I have been sick at the 'Star and Garter,' Jack answered, his face flushing; "had a horrible headache. I think the villains there made me take more than I was aware of. For two whole days I knew nothing."

"Bad fix to be in. I say, why don't you determine to give up going there?"

"Easier proposed than accomplished, like all plans. All the fellows go, else of course I should not. It's really the best place in town to get lunch. The only decent oyster-saloon. I'm a fool though to do as I do."

"Well, brighten up. Here, give me the poker. I've just come from the Burton's; Miss Nettie and I were discussing this book, when some gossip visitors came, and I took my departure."

"What is it?"

“‘Emerson’s Essay on the Over Soul.’”

“You are quite a pantheist, are you not?”

“No, I only incline towards it. I am in that unenviable condition of not being able to decide what creed to adopt. Pantheism is very fascinating, and if you once admit its premises, the conclusion is logical. But some way I cannot rid myself of involuntary conceptions of the Supreme being, which run directly ——”

“My conceptions take a materialistic form,” interrupted Jack. “I believe force rules the universe, although undoubtedly inscrutable, and beyond our comprehension.”

“Miss Burton would refute you by saying that you are really predicating the existence of God or a supreme being, though in other words.”

“Well, I didn’t intend to prevent you airing your pantheistic theories.”

Arthur laughed, but instead of taking up his idea, he said :

“You cannot controvert Miss Burton, you perceive. I tell you she takes theories which I have fancied at last manifested the unity for which I long, and by a few cuts of her logic has dismembered them into unsightly fragments, having no

system or harmony. By the way, Jack, she and Kate said the other day, that they wondered where you were. They are quite interested in you, though they look upon your course with sorrow and disfavor."

"I am sure their favor would be very acceptable to me. In order to obtain it, I suppose I must assume a long face, sing psalms, so stifle my abhorrence as to sue for admittance into this remarkably pure and unworldly brotherhood of Christians, and lastly throw all my wine into the street, and grow thin on weak tea."

"Don't joke, old fellow. You know Kate better than to think such hypocrisy would please her; and as for Miss Nettie, why you have only to get well acquainted with her to admire, respect and almost reverence her."

"I suppose you cherish all these three manifestations of preferences?"

"Of course; else I should not speak so positively."

"Oh well! very soon you'll see me high in these young ladies' favor, at the very top, and alas! you will have sunk correspondingly. I'll sign the pledge, join the church, in fact, become

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a proficient in the divine arts. I will, to your anxious vision, prefigure my future aspect. Look!"

By a skilful stroke Jack had pulled his thick, brown hair over his temples, straightened up his collar into Puritanic stiffness, and put upon his fine Roman nose a pair of old spectacles which had been lying conveniently on his dressing-table. Drawing down the corners of his mouth, and with a snifle and drawling accent, he said, dolefully:

"My brother do you realize the fearful state you are in? the stupendous danger of your course? Realize, realize, these great terrible truths. Have regard to the health of your immortal soul."

But Arthur, though convulsed with laughter at the sight of the droll looking figure, and almost perfect imitation of Mr. Robinson, stopped him by saying:

"Oh Jack, Jack! You will have to go through a longer apprenticeship ere Christianity and cant sit well upon you. Here take that chair. By the way what an old foggy that Robinson is. Catch me ever going to a meeting again when he harangues for an hour or two about apostolic prac-



tices, the degeneracy of our own times, and the general miserable condition of the world. You are like Kate in your crazy escapades. You should have heard her only the other day caricaturing his oddities. It was perfectly killing."


"And how does the estimable Miss Burton regard such unholy and scandalous parodies on the good soul? With horror and dismay, I presume, eh, brother McDonald?"

"Oh, Jack, you are incorrigible! When are you going to settle down into a staid, sober doctor, and eschew the frivolities of youthful life?"

"Now Arthur McDonald mark: When next you behold me I *will* be staid and sober—a tear glistening in my fathomless grey eyes, a heavy load upon my heart, a burden of sin upon my conscience. All the young ladies in town will sympathize and condole with my secret grief. But afterwards I shall emerge into freedom and liberty. It will be just a visible pointing of Mr. Robinson's graphic description of a reprobate changed into a psalm-singing, hypocritical Christian. Now before that blessed change, I am going to vault over these chairs, and see if I can do so without breaking my precious head. As I must

eschew the frivolities of the world, this is a parting tribute to the forever-to-be-relinquished charms of leap-frog."

(Now as Lockwood recalled these foolish words, uttered under the excitement of impulse and love of fun and gayety, he wondered if Arthur really imagined him to have been in earnest. If he believed his subsequent profession of Christianity to be the outgrowth of a regard for expediency, a desire to win favor, respect, esteem, instead of a sincere and radical change in the very source of his convictions, feelings and affections.) Soon after that, Arthur took his departure, and Lockwood once more attempted to read. But with the withdrawal of an external presence to inspire and call into action his inherent gayety, his spirits sank, and he became conscious of a return of the miserable depression and despondency which had before assailed him. How discouraging to possess capacities for nobleness, greatness and purity, and from an infirmness of purpose, to make no progress or advance! He knew he had talent, comprehensive grasp of intellect, and a real passionate love for science, but the years were slipping away, and still he had not gained the confidence and trust



of the people of Belmont. He could not blame them for distrusting a man who was half the time in an unmanly state of intoxication, and the other half suffering the nervous weakness and lassitude which is its invariable accompaniment.

How many times he had resolved to be no more a slave to sin, to break from the fetters which every day were becoming stronger, tighter, more inextricable, and so many times he had miserably, ignobly failed. He did not like to think of the sorrow such habits entailed on others—the grief, the heartache. . . Up on the hill-side, at the foot of dark pines which moaned and sobbed in the chill winter wind, were two lonely, solitary graves. If it had been daylight he could have seen them from his window, here. But he needed no such light to make them visible to his mental consciousness. He could see the lettering on the white marble, the words of one inscription seeming to burn into his mind like an accusing conscience:

“Sacred to the memory of

GRACE STUART LOCKWOOD.

Who died after a lingering illness, Jan. 3d, 18—,

Aged 31 years.

“Though they sleep in the dust, they shall arise to everlasting life.”

Thirteen long years ago! And yet he knew the cause of the anxiety and anguish which before she was yet thirty, had streaked the dark hair with gray, and made the premature wrinkles steal gradually into the sweet, patient face.

He knew his mother's heart had been broken by disappointment and unfulfilled hopes. The love and trust which had made the first years of her married life so bright and beautiful had been changed to despair and shame on account of her husband's life of sin and reckless error. What if she knew that her boy — the only one for whom she wished to live, that she might guide and shield him from the fatal influence of his father's example — that her boy whom she had on her death-bed committed to God, was going the same downward path?

Perhaps she did know. . . The idea was intolerable. He rose and paced the floor restlessly.

Where could he get the help, the strength, so necessary to be faithful to his resolution? Certainly not in himself — he knew too well what an unreliable and deceptive support this had hitherto proved. Could he, would he, ask the help of God? But did he believe in God? What evi-

dence to his senses of the existence of such a being?

Long ago in the commencement of his college career, he had affirmed that no knowledge is obtainable except by means of sensation or experience. Clearly the possibility of the existence of a supreme, infinite and divine being lay beyond the region of sensation. And yet to-night he knew that he could not adhere to this past belief.

He was conscious, intuitively, of spiritual influences whose reality he could not doubt. It seemed that something external to himself was revealing to his perception the depths of his own wretchedness, sinfulness, and ignoble, unworthy tastes and desires. Could it be the Spirit of God?

All that night he thought intensely, persistently, and in the morning his mind was still agitated, restless and unsatisfied. He could not shake off the impression of a divine presence, a divine witness of his most trivial action. In vain he sought to deaden his nervous sensibility by appeals to the evil spirit of the wine-cup. For once its help was unavailing.

He incurred Dr. Dent's censure by mixing medicines in unequal proportions and giving incoherent replies to necessary questions. At last about four o'clock, unable to restrain longer his impatience, he obtained permission, under a plea of illness, to go home.

Haunted by fears, made miserable by remorse, desirous of doing anything to hush these reproachful voices of his now thoroughly awakened conscience he had just turned down the street leading to the "Star and Garter," when, as the compassionate God so ordered, he almost ran against Mr. Ellerton. The clergyman, struck by something unusual in the expression of his face — some sadness and despair unable to be concealed, stopped, and kindly said: "Oh, Dr. Lockwood, my wife and I were talking about you only this morning. We wished we knew you better — why can't you come to tea to-night? I am just in the humor for being entertained — and really you would be conferring a great pleasure upon us by coming."

Here was help, guidance, deliverance, from his own weakness and impotence of purpose!

Almost breathlessly, and for a motive of which he was entirely unconscious, the invitation was accepted. The result of their conference together is well known.

Jack went home to his rooms that evening with light — the glorious light of God's love and forgiveness and promised salvation — shining full and clear in his heart's inner depths.

CHAPTER XI.

MISUNDERSTOOD.

"For to thrust out a friend of noble heart,
Is like the parting with the life we love." — *Sophocles.*

CONTRARY to Arthur's expectations, Bella Forrester excluded Latin from her list of studies; hence she and Nettie were not brought into disagreeable relations immediately. About the time she was admitted into the school, Arthur, who was growing impatient for definite action, determined to leave for New York, and enter upon the work he had chosen. But several weeks flew by ere his preparations were completed, and he was ready to bid a final farewell to "desultory, but charming pursuits."

"I am very sorry, however, that I am compelled to go leaving all my plans in regard to you unfulfilled," he said to Nettie, as he overtook her on the way home from down-town one afternoon.

"Do not imagine but that the arguments in their favor were attentively considered, Arthur. My whole intellect pleaded so hard; but duty sternly forbade. Yet if father had thought otherwise, I believe I could not have helped yielding, but his judgment was all on the side of my remaining at home. . . I never can express to you my appreciation of your thoughtfulness for my welfare. . . I dare not try to imagine what my Belmont life would have been without the light of your presence. When everything was so changed, and we were fleeing away from the ruins of our 'household gods;' from all which we thought made life beautiful and desirable, I did not anticipate winning two such friends in Belmont as you and Kate."

She stopped, unable to control her voice

Arthur did not reply until they reached the gate. Then he came nearer to her, and took her hand:

"Nettie! do not thank me; the obligation is

wholly on my side. You know not from what you have saved me; from what dreary abysses of doubt and despair, by your clear, cogent words, uttered from time to time. We shall not have many more delightful hours. Next Monday I leave, you know. I believe my mother is going to have her party Friday evening. May I come Saturday evening, and finish that book of 'Young's'?"

"I shall expect you. But are you not going to see Kate?"

His eyes fell before her wistful, searching look:

"I shall bid her good-bye, Friday, if she will allow me to escort her home. How is she, really Nettie? I have not spoken to her for four or five weeks; they seem as many months."

"She is well, except for hard headaches, occasionally. She is studying hard. Arthur—I can't help wishing she knew!"

"It would be useless—only a source of mortification to me. I really prefer she should not. It would prevent any further freedom of action between us."

"You are too proud; and at the same time too distrustful."

It so happened that at that moment a pair of bright blue eyes looked out from the sitting-room window. Kate had come up to see Nettie about some intricate "Latin prose," and not finding her at home had sat down to wait, talking brightly meanwhile to Mrs. Burton, who, as usual, was engaged with her interminable sewing. Hearing voices at the gate, she jumped up and looked out. Arthur had still hold of Nettie's hand. With the earnest gravity of his face was blended an expression of unusual affectionate tenderness, while his cheeks and brow were flushed, because of the implied half-reproach in her just uttered words. Kate's heart gave one great throb of pain. For a moment she felt she could not move; something against her will magnetically attracted her eyes and rooted her to the spot. If she could have heard their previous words she would not have suffered this physical shock. The next moment she realized the necessity for self-control, and almost unconsciously she resumed her seat. As she did so, Mrs. Burton noticed the pallor of her face — the tight compression of her lips.

"You do not feel well, to-day?" she asked.

The girl's voice to herself sounded strange and unnatural; but in reality, it was only lower, softer than usual, as she answered directly — she was now thorough master of her feelings:

"No, Mrs. Burton, for the last month or two I have suffered a good deal of headache. The pain is of a darting nature, consequent upon any sudden, violent movement or excitement. It is spasmodic, and goes away very much as it came;" and on hearing the slam of the front door, Kate rose in time to clasp Nettie in her arms with a close pressure which had in it something of pain and involuntary thoughts of self-renunciation, as well as of self-forgetful love.

CHAPTER XII.

SOCIAL DISCUSSIONS.

"My own word sinks deep within; away from the surface of my life."—*Margaret Fuller.*

I HOPE the party will not be a failure," remarked Mrs. McDonald, to Arthur, as she passed him his cup of tea that evening. "There are not many in Belmont whom Belle and Eva would choose to meet; and if the night should prove to be stormy, or a thaw set in to spoil the sleighing, the people from Newton and Woodbridge on whom we depend, would not come."

"The infallible almanac prophesies a full moon, and this cold, clear weather bids fair to last the

rest of the week," returned Arthur; "and even if these rich Woodbridge butterflies of fashion fail to fly into our clutches to dazzle and bewilder us by their brilliancy, the spectacle of an assembly composed exclusively of Belmont bees, would have an element of novelty quite gratifying to my fair cousins."

"Thank you," said Eva, looking up and meeting his grave, significant glance.

Mrs. McDonald moved restlessly in her chair.

"The bees have a good representative in you, I think. A little more of the butterfly would not detract from your agreeable influence. What are you going to do this evening?"

"Read law. I am all behindhand, on account of numerous social employments in which my before mentioned fair cousins, have co-operated. They will have to relinquish the pleasure of my society this evening."

"I think we can survive," remarked Belle, as she helped herself to a piece of cake.

"You do not surely imagine I would run the risk of your decease by —"

"Please *do* keep from your perpetual contention," said Eva, in a tone which this time was

not languid: "you know you never get more amicable."

Arthur withdrew his eyes from Belle and looked at her smilingly. She was dressed in a dark brown silk which contrasted well with her fair complexion and light hair. Blue ribbons fluttered around her throat and at her wrists, and the diamonds in her brooch flashed and sparkled in the brilliant gas-light. She looked very handsome, very elegant—but the face lacked energy and decision, and that *strong* expression which comes from noble contemplation, and engagements with great thoughts.

It was one of Mrs. McDonald's cherished hopes that some time her son and this wealthy, handsome cousin, would be married. And yet at this time she was piqued and annoyed at his indifference to her society, his ill-concealed uneasiness when forced to spend an evening with her, instead of among his books, his apparent impatience at her sometimes commonplace statements.

"I am so sorry you have quarreled with that Dr. Lockwood; aunt says he used to be here so much," Eva said, after a pause.

"I have not quarreled with him. . . But why are you sorry?"

"I like his face so much. He is real fine looking, and his manners are so refined. He called yesterday."

"Mary Ashworth at school says he's splendid," remarked Belle. "Can't we have him at the party?"

"I have already sent an invitation," answered Mrs. McDonald.

"Oh, by the way, Belle, have you said anything yet to that Miss Wallace, who sang so beautifully at that meeting? She and her mother called last week, while we were out."

"No; she isn't in any of my classes, except botany. The first day we recited that, she was absent, and the next she went immediately to another class, so I have not spoken to her. All the girls say she's splendid."

"Do you think you will like school?" asked Arthur.

"Yes; except it's pretty hard for me. That Miss Wallace is in all the highest classes. I guess she's — how old is she?"

"Nineteen."

After that the conversation drifted back to the anticipated party, and Arthur relapsed into one of those fits of gloomy abstraction which were becoming more and more habitual. His mother's voice, noting the fact that his tea was getting cold, recalled his thoughts.

"Girls run and wrap up, and I'll give you a drive of half an hour," he said, as he pushed back his chair, and rose to his feet.

"No thank you. We could not think of taking you away from that dusty book," answered Eva, smiling.

He did not look the relief he felt, nor did he urge his proposal. The next moment he had opened the door of his study, and left her standing in the hall alone.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARTY.

"We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own heart's."— *Common Prayer*.

IT would be impossible to record all the interesting details of the party at Mrs. McDonald's. Everybody went who was invited, for the moon *was* full, and the sleighing in excellent condition. Perhaps never had Belmont witnessed such a brilliant, fashionable gathering. Its prospective merits were freely discussed before the eventful evening, but the retrospective criticisms founded on more definite and positive fact, waxed now en-

thusiastic, now condemnatory, and was of course eminently profitable to all therein engaged.

Kate was in her element to-night. Her brilliant, witty way of talking, her bright face, her real, fascinating magnetism of manner, made her the centre of different groups of young people almost the entire evening. She laughed, jested and chattered to her heart's content. Her singing was praised, she saw she was adding to others' enjoyment, hence all things in combination were a source of keen pleasure.

Not till the evening had far advanced, did Arthur see an opportunity to approach her.


Slightly wearying of this high excitement, she withdrew into the shade of one of the folding doors, between the drawing-rooms, in order to listen to Eva's careful cultivated singing of that exquisite "*J espère que non.*" Kate's opportunities for hearing the finest music had been limited, hence almost hungrily her mind caught the beautiful notes. Never heard before, they were a revelation of feelings analogous to her own, when she once allowed herself to stop and think. She had not spoken to Arthur for six weeks. She knew he was going away, perhaps never to come back

the same. She felt fully persuaded that his best and strongest affections had been given to Nettie, yet she knew he wanted her to still be his friend. She was sorry for her unfriendly words and actions, even though she felt their necessity, and would not have changed their significance if she had the power.

She did not know that he was even at this moment watching the expression of her face, his heart beating in strange sympathy with hers.

The young lady whom he was assuming to entertain, wondered at his absent-minded eyes, and ever and anon fitful efforts to recover the fast slipping away thread of their conversation. Finally the music ceased, and the hush which had involuntarily fallen among the merry groups around the piano, was changed into a noisy chatter of many voices. Still Kate stood there in the shadow, not yet ready to rush once more into the festivities, which would stop this thinking. Not until she heard at her elbow Arthur's voice, did her usual manner come back :

"Are you wearying of the conquests you have made, Kate, that you seclude yourself from the anxious gaze of so many eyes?"



He spoke in a tone which carefully concealed his real earnestness.

"Yes," she answered, brightly; "abundance surfeits."

"Well, suppose I make a conquest of you, (chain of destruction, you see,) and carry you off to see some new books I've added to my library lately."

"We needn't be long away?" she asked, before she took his offered arm.

"No, not unless you wish it."

She noticed the quick expression of disappointment which crossed his face and with wonderful concealment of herself, laughed roguishly :

"You see I am vexed that you have not been near me all the evening, and I wish to punish you by not promising to irradiate your gloomy study very long with my presence."

"How do you imagine I have felt all the evening?" he asked, looking at the bright, apparently happy face by his side.

"Desperately unhappy, I suppose."

"Oh Kate! don't!"

"Pardon me, Arthur, you should have known I was joking."

But she said no more for they had reached the library.

"There is that old copy of Scott I have kept so long," he remarked, as they brushed past the table. "Do you remember when we read 'Lady of the Lake,' that day under the apple-tree in the orchard?"

"Yes," she answered briefly, her brow contracting. He misinterpreted the cause of this — evidently reminiscences of their early friendship were displeasing.

He changed the subject by lifting a heavy book from the shelf, and throwing it on the table, with the words:

"Here is a fine copy of Flaxman with which my mother presented me last night. Nettie and I were looking it over this evening. What nice discernment she has for the beautiful. She should be either an artist or musician, by profession. I think she would excel."

"I know nothing in which she would not excel, if she applied to it her whole energy, and had advantages of leisure and wealth," returned Kate, enthusiastically.

"She would improve such advantages better

than I have, I fear." Arthur glanced regretfully at his books. "What wisdom, what glorious and grand thoughts lie between these covers! How few I have made my own. Just begun on a mountain of gold whose value is priceless."

He half averted his face, and seizing the chance, Kate gave herself one long, close look at it. But the next minute her eyes were on one of Flaxman's exquisite sketches for he had once more turned round, and taken from a side desk a long, narrow box which he opened. It contained diamond editions of the poets, bound elegantly in green morocco. With a little cry of delight, she seized on Mrs. Browning, and glancing through it hastily ~~passed~~ at the "Rhapsody of Life's Progress." Involuntarily she uttered aloud the words she read:

"O life, O Beyond.

Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore.

The strong arch

Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,

And we hear the sweet calling. . .

Of spirits, . . . And we cry to them softly;

Come nearer, come nearer

And lift up the lap of this Dark, and
 Speak clearer,
And teach *us* the song that ye sung. . .
 O life, O Beyond
Thou art strange, thou art sweet."

But suddenly she stopped.

As if an echo to her swift thought, Arthur asked sadly :

"Is it only the life beyond which will be sweet ?
Oh Kate ! can you —"

But his question was never finished, for at that inopportune time, merry voices were heard going past the partially closed door — eager inquiries for Miss Wallace being distinguishable amid the confused hum.

"I must go, Arthur. You perceive I am an important personage among these heartless revelers," she said laughingly, dashing away the tears which had persisted in coming into her eyes while she had read the strange, impressive words.

But he waited a moment ere he moved aside to let her pass.

"I intended to have a chance for a grand speech, but fortune sternly cuts me off. I bought

these books for you as my parting blessing. I hope you will honor me by accepting them."

Her silent answer though very indefinite, was more eloquent than words. With playful grace she took up Mrs. Browning and kissed the leaves lovingly. The next moment he was alone.

Meanwhile, Nettie had been induced by Dr. Lockwood to fill a pause in the musical entertainment of the evening. He happened to select Mendelssohn's "Retrospection." The notes broken up as they were by intervening sounds, reached Kate's ears as she emerged from the study into the hall. The air was familiar — she herself had often sung it to the words "Rock of Ages," but never before had its sweetness and sadness impressed her with such force. It changed her motive. Instead of joining the group which awaited her, the tired-hearted girl impulsively and ruled by a strong desire to escape from the necessity of being merry when she felt no merriment, turned and bounded up the stairs to the dressing-room. To her annoyance she found it occupied by both Belle and Eva Forrester. Recovering quickly from her confusion, as she saw her approach had been noticed, she retreated into an

adjoining room and sat down to indulge herself with one moment of undisturbed quiet. But almost simultaneously voices in the other room attracted her attention, and there seemed to be no alternative but to listen to the frivolous words. It was Eva who was speaking:

“What a good time we are having. You would hardly imagine those were country people. I told cousin Arthur he succeeded in making everything pass off—”

“Yes, but how devoted he has been to Nettie Burton all the evening. From the moment she and that pokey sister entered the house, he has stuck to her as tight as though jealous of other people having the privilege of talking to her.”

“Why, Belle, you know his motives. She is diffident and retiring, apt to be bored in a large company. He just wants to make it pleasant for her.”

“The chivalrous fellow! You are very charitable to impute these self-denying motives to his lordship. Your wish makes you think so. But every one else can see he’s dead in love with her. Positively his attentions have been so marked that every one thinks that they are engaged. Dr.

Dent, what an old fuss-budget he is, by the way, says so."

"Dr. Dent is everybody, I suppose," dryly remarked Eva.

"Yes; and Mrs. Derwent says that Arthur considers her as having the finest mind in town — man, woman or child."

"You have been very assiduous in gathering information. Have you any more stored up?"

"Yes — but we cannot stop for it all. It's hateful to have him make so much of that poor, almost destitute girl. If he must throw himself away on any of these Belmont girls, why doesn't he pick out that Miss Wallace. She's so jolly and splendid — a nice contrast to his grave, deacon face. Have you been introduced to her, Eva?"

"Yes; and she *is* jolly, something of the 'dare devil,' about her, too. Everybody seems to like her, though —"

"Yes; and her father's a lawyer, and almost a judge, and there isn't such a wide distance between the two. But Nettie... I am sure aunt can't like it. I don't think she knows much about it however. I overheard them talking while

that Miss Wallace was singing. He told her to be sure and reserve all Saturday evening for him, to finish some book. And you know he goes early Monday morning. That looks as though he cared more for her company than he does for ours or any one else's. And he'll be busy packing Sunday night. I always thought Nettie Burton a deceitful, scheming girl, and I believe I detest her more than ever. You should have seen her blush and start back, when I went up to her and said I was glad to renew acquaintance; that I was so pained to notice her circumstances so perceptibly changed, that she must feel country life to be so different from the city, but it was so much cheaper living here, and people did not look down on you for your poverty etc., etc."

"That was just like you, Belle. If you're not careful you'll have Arthur lecturing you again. How biting he was that night."

"A clear proof he was careful of her feelings. What a chivalrous lover he will be."

"But, Belle, you should not have said those things to her. It was really unkind —"

"Well, don't lecture," said Belle, cutting short the languid protest against her actions. We ought

to go down-stairs. Come! are you ready? That bow on the left is displaced.

To the half-curious, half-unwilling listener, the sound of their retreating footsteps was a great relief. She had thrown herself on a low lounge covered over with cloaks, shawls, and other wraps. Shivering nervously, as if her sensibility had received a sudden shock, she now drew a shawl over her shoulders and hid her face in its folds. It was not the beginning of her struggle with a first great sorrow. The life of the past few weeks had not been all sunlit—shadows dark and dusky, had thronged around everything that might have been to her a source of happiness. She had depended on Arthur continually, it had seemed so natural, an inevitable consequence of their childhood life. This dependence had grown stronger year by year, but not until she saw how much he and Nettie were together, what close friends they were, did she awaken to the consciousness how necessary it had been to her happiness.

We know how utterly false were her conceptions of the nature of their friendship; but when such conceptions are once formed, every action, word and look is charged with significance, and

by the imagination made to harmonize with them. Even now she did not half understand why she could not be satisfied, inexperienced as her young heart was to suffering. She fancied if she could trust herself not to betray her feelings, she might still receive great consolation from his friendship. But if he guessed them, if Nettie discovered her secret? Oh, she could not incur this possibility of grieving her "darling"—better to be alienated from him altogether. She would not accept his courteously offered present. He could give the books to Eva Forrester.

And so Kate's mind was in a whirl of contradictory and perplexing thoughts. Perhaps it was fully half an hour that she remained there in the dark cloak-room. She heard several go and come in the other room, but no one had ventured into her hiding-place.

At last to her dismay she heard a well-known voice in the hall, and these were the words :

"I do not see where she has gone. She was in the study with me a moment or two, and then we heard she was wanted in the drawing-room, and she left me rather hurriedly. You say she didn't go down there?"

"Yes," answered another familiar voice, "I was watching for her return; anxious you know for the success of your experiment. I have not seen her since you made a capture of her at last."

"Rather a transient capture, however. She seemed not at all sorry to escape. But we must find her before supper."

Kate heard Nettie's steps go across the dressing-room. If she could only get away unnoticed. With a sudden bound she sprang up, but a severe darting pain through her head warned her to adopt less sudden movements. The next moment Arthur's hand was on the door-knob, and they stood face to face. Her pale, startled face surprised him so that he did not speak immediately. Then he asked, anxiously:

"Are you ill, Kate? Tell me what is the matter?"

She put her hand wearily up to her head:

"I have a terrible ache inside there."

Then a revulsion of feeling conquering her, she laughed unaffectedly — even at this moment perceiving that their attitude and expression were rather tragical:

that Miss Wallace was singing. He told her to be sure and reserve all Saturday evening for him, to finish some book. And you know he goes early Monday morning. That looks as though he cared more for her company than he does for ours or any one else's. And he'll be busy packing Sunday night. I always thought Nettie Burton a deceitful, scheming girl, and I believe I detest her more than ever. You should have seen her blush and start back, when I went up to her and said I was glad to renew acquaintance; that I was so pained to notice her circumstances so perceptibly changed, that she must feel country life to be so different from the city, but it was so much cheaper living here, and people did not look down on you for your poverty etc., etc."

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ing-table, and with it vigorously rubbed her cheeks, till their color nearly rivalled the pink trimmings of her muslin dress.

Nettie laughed:

"You are quite an artist," she said; then after a pause, added:

"Oh, Kate, do you suppose they are going to have wine to-night?"

"At the sudden question Kate turned around and exclaimed impetuously:

"For mercy's sake, I hope not. Why Arthur would not allow it, would he?"

"I don't know. A while ago I was promenading with Dr. Lockwood and every now and then as we passed Mrs. McDonald and Eva, we could catch their words. Eva was saying something about something being so nonsensical puritanic, inhospitable, etc., and Mrs. McDonald replied that she knew Arthur would be angry.

Then as we neared them again, she said:

"Well I do it solely to gratify you; of course I have no scruples myself! I really believe they referred to furnishing wine. I hope Dr. Lockwood won't—Dear Kate I wish he would take you out to supper."

But it so happened as the two girls descended. the company had already taken up its march to the supper-table. At the foot of the stairs Arthur was waiting, and standing by his side was a tall black-bearded gentleman, with kind, sincere eyes. Kate liked him at the very first glance.

“Miss Wallace, allow me to introduce my friend, Mr. Rossbach. Nettie, may I have the pleasure?”

And Arthur offered her his arm and preceded Mr. Rossbach and Kate in the procession. But before they reached their destination they got separated and Kate found herself placed between Mrs. McDonald and Belle Forrester. As she took her seat Belle said to Dr. Lockwood, who was standing by her side:

“I suppose of course you know Miss Wallace, you all know each other here (so delightful.) I have been anxious to get acquainted all the evening. I have had no chance to speak to her at school, though I have been on the look out every day ——”

Kate laughed:

“You are beginning splendidly, Miss Forrester. Nothing like a little flattery to remove the first

stiffness of an introduction. I shall reciprocate, only by saying that ever since I heard reports of some of your words this evening, I have felt a great interest in you."

Kate was in that wretched condition when her own pain and unhappiness made her anxious to rush into the opposite extreme of reckless meriment, or to deaden her own sensibility by voluntarily hurting the sensibility of others. The same cause makes one in a moment of anger long to break a valuable statuette or injure a choice book by flinging it violently against some hard, resisting surface.

Belle's face flushed scarlet — to Kate's eyes indicative of annoyance and mortification, but she said, with assumed indifference :

"People have always flattered me by considering my speeches of sufficient importance to repeat. By the way, Mr. Rossbach, do you still think gossip is such a terrible evil, when it leads Miss Wallace to cherish interest in me?"

"Yes, Miss Belle. I believe that three-fourths of the heart-aches, miserable, disappointed friendships, the estrangements which appear so common, are due to incautious, thoughtless, aye and sinful

repetitions of words uttered either in confidence, or under the assumption that if repeated, they will be done so truthfully, with no distorted facts. This has been the cause of so much of the unhappiness which we in our blindness, consider inevitable. Some lives have been blasted, spoiled — mildew on the freshness and beauty — by the blighting breath of slander. Miss Wallace, excuse me. May I help you to some turkey or duck, and will you have some salad?"

He took her plate and disappeared in the throng of gentlemen around the table.

Belle laughed :

"He is such a fanatic on this subject, and on temperance, too. You should hear his pathetic speeches ; positively almost heart rending as he describes the horrors of a drunkard's life."

"And do you not think that the subject admits of pathos and earnestness?" asked Lockwood, as he handed her a dish of oysters.

"Very likely, but I don't like to be troubled by hearing about it. If men are so blind and foolish as to ruin their lives, they should be content to suffer without making us wretched by witnessing their sufferings.

"This participation in another's sorrow is one great principle at the root of Christian life."

"Yes; but when one can't help any body, what is the use of worrying himself with their troubles?"

"Quite useless probably, Miss Forrester," Lockwood answered, as he turned away to reach her a cup of coffee.

"Why cannot you help these tempted, wayward men by your encouragement," said Kate, "your efforts to create in their hearts the desire for nobler, better lives, your faultless example —"

"Why, one would think from what you say that I was thrown in their company constantly," answered Belle, illogically evading the question: "I would no more talk to a drunkard, than fly."

"You must have often done so, at parties."

"Yes, but they weren't intoxicated at the time; and then we usually go home soon after supper and so avoid seeing anything very foolish. And as far as example is concerned, I can't conceive how my taking a glass of wine, once in a while, is going to make another take fifty. If he followed my example he would take one. Why, if the fellows can't drink in our presence, they go

to worse places for it. . . And then it's so unfashionable not to have wine, and I really confess I do not see the necessity to overturn good old customs. Thank you, Mr. Lockwood, I do not care for coffee."

"Shall I get you a glass of wine, Miss Belle?" Mr. Rossbach asked, as he just came up in time to catch her last words, and to notice that Jack showed no disposition to supply the place of the rejected beverage.

"Yes, please. I prefer sherry. Do not bring me port."

"Pardon me, Miss Forrester. I have been remiss in my duty."

"Do not apologize Dr. Lockwood. I suppose you doctors are all inclined to be absent-minded."

The doctor did not reply. As he saw Mr. Rossbach approaching with the wine, his face turned very pale, and he grasped the back of Kate's chair as if for support. Had all his miserable strivings been unavailing — was there to be a return of the hard, desperate struggles?

With a silent prayer for help he stood there, and saw the young lady lift the glass to her lips. Almost wild with desire, he yet resisted the im-

pulse to snatch it from her white hands. Kate who had looked up anxiously, saw his eyes fixed on the amber-colored wine, and their strained, unnatural expression almost frightened her. At the same moment Belle turned around.

"I accepted your gracefully uttered apology. Now won't you take some with me as a pledge that our acquaintance shall not end with this evening?"

But before he could either accept or refuse, Kate, into whose mind thoughts of the requisite courtesy did not till afterwards enter, half-started from her chair, and exclaimed in an impetuous, but low tone which she however fancied was audible to the whole room:

"How dare you ask him to do that?"

Belle opened her eyes wide with astonishment. Vague ideas of this clever independent girl being either crazy or wofully ill-bred flashed through her mind. Her lip curled scornfully, but she did not recover from her astonishment with sufficient rapidity to reply immediately.

"Jack, won't you take me into the drawing-room. Mr. Rossbach I know you will excuse me, if I leave Miss Forrester in your care." . .

Jack jumped to her side with alacrity, and in another moment the two had emerged from the close, stifling atmosphere of the supper-room. . . The long drawing-room was empty. Kate led the way to a large chair at the further end, and seating herself, she motioned her companion to a low ottoman at her feet:

"What a relief this is! How I hate that vain, silly cousin of Arthur's. . . Poor Jack!"

He tried to smile: "I fear you have made her your enemy for life, for my sake," he said, with an affectionate look up into her face.

"No, Jack. The moment I saw her I knew our natures would be antagonistic. I have tried to avoid her at school, for fear I should lose my patience against my will. She has no depth of feeling or thought. It seems as though it would be hopeless to endeavor to impress her mind with any high or noble conception. She is shallow and false. . . But I have an apology confronting me. How recklessly hot-tempered I am! Can't you give me some of your strength to conquer natural propensities? You are an instance of my own comparative failure."

"Ah! You do not know how really weak I

am. It seems now that—that had you not interfered as you did I must have taken a glass of wine. I was in a kind of hazy dream, when your quick, impetuous words awakened me, and I became aware I was standing on the edge of a dark abyss. . . I know of nothing which you do not possess, in more abundance than I, dear Kate, unless it be—love for the Redeemer.”

“There! I might have known you would say that,” she answered, playfully, “some day I will astonish you all by symptoms of superior godliness; till then you will have to endure my natural characteristics.”

“Such endurance does not demand great fortitude,” Jack answered sincerely, “I shall always admire you, whether you profess Christianity or not; yet I cannot help thinking that it would add brightness and freshness to your life. You would not be less joyous, less buoyant, but more really happy.”

“Who imagines I am not happy Jack? Surely my actions are a direct contradiction to such imaginations?”

“You know I am a doctor, Kate, and a very learned one too—an assertion which all the old

people in town corroborate. Well, I not only make physical diseases a study—I sometimes investigate mental. The subject though occult, is very fascinating. I have studied you, almost the entire evening. You are not contented, yet you try to persuade yourself that life gives you all you desire. You are not restful, you struggle desperately, but wearily against unwelcome thoughts. However bright and vivacious your face and manner have been, there have been depths of sadness in your heart. The surface sparkles as does the topmost wave of the ocean, which dances and tosses in the sunlight, but the current underneath runs cold and dark. . . The cause of this I know not, nor do I desire to know, but this I believe, that earth hath no sorrow which Heaven cannot heal. Do you mind my saying this, Kate?"

While speaking his eyes had rested on the floor, but now as he waited for her answer, he raised them to her face.

"No Jack," she answered, gently, "you do well to speak of this. It is quite true all you have said. I am not happy. I desire a reality and permanence to joy which this life cannot give: but the way to a better life is shadowy; obscured

by clouds of doubt and unbelief. I am trying, however, to get light. Be assured I realize its value. . . But in some respects you mistake me. Many of my changes of expression and manner are owing to real physical pain. When it attacks me I can think of nothing else. It is gone the next moment. I beg you will receive this information as professional."

"I know your symptoms. You see my description will point my previous assertion of my scientific skill. You suffer from neuralgia. When you are unduly excited by anything which appeals strongly to either your imagination, or sympathy, you experience this sharp cutting pain. Any sudden movement, following upon prolonged rest, also brings it on."

"Well, Jack Lockwood you are skilful! I could not have described it more accurately myself."

She looked at him with genuine admiration. In return he smiled pleasantly, though he went on in the same tone:

"I would advise you to try and control the turbulence of your thoughts and feelings. You live too intensely. The mood is either very joy-

ous or very despondent. Don't indulge in these extremes. Regard things more evenly, more soberly. I can sympathize with you thoroughly, for I have very much the same temperament."

"Do you ever feel that if you didn't either ride to the moon, or go up a million feet into the air you would die?"

"Yes, yes—I feel within me a force propelling me to furious and violent deeds. At such moments I would like to be a warrior. Any way I feel as though I must astonish some one by my extravagance."

"That's just it, I want something unusual, startling or terrible to happen. Or I want to hurt something. Why only to-day I tied the cat's tail tight to my chair. How she screamed and yelled! It was just like an earthquake, and I stood by grimly enjoying her distress. Fancy a young lady of nineteen, condescending to be so childish! In a few minutes my passion cooled down—how miserably mean I felt for my selfish cruelty. But it did me good, Jack, it really did. I had tried to read Virgil before, but I had been restless, nervous. I afterwards sat down and I don't think

my mind wandered till I had read through nearly half of the seventh book. . . What strange constructions these natures of ours are," Kate added, sinking into a reverie.

"I heard one or two bits of gossip this evening with which I must entertain you," Jack said, after a short pause. "One is that Miss Burton and Arthur are engaged. Is it so?"

His tone was calm, yet Kate's sympathetic ear caught its cadence of sadness. She answered cheerfully.

"There is strong evidence pointing that way, but we cannot be sure till we hear it from themselves. I hardly think they are ready for anything so positive, but I do not doubt they are very dear to each other. Oh! there they come! You will not go back with the gentlemen to supper, will you?" she asked, as she rose to her feet.

"No." His cheek flushed slightly, but his eye did not avoid hers.

Kate did not see the dark shadow which crossed Arthur's face as his eye, even at that distance noticed Jack's position so close to her. She was looking for Belle Forrester and Mr. Rossbach, who

were not long in appearing. They were chatting very confidentially and pleasantly together, though as the former espied Kate she changed color, and frowned darkly.

After the gentlemen had taken their departure, Kate went up to where Belle was standing alone, and said, with characteristic directness:

"Miss Forrester, I most humbly apologize for my rude words. My sole excuse, if there be any, is that I am very impulsive, and that I did not stop to think but that you were aware of the peculiar condition of Dr. Lockwood. If he had accepted your invitation to take wine with you, the work of long, struggling weeks would have been destroyed. It is not long since he gave up drinking to excess, and his sole safety consists in his refraining to drink at all. The reason, too, that I deprived him of the pleasure of attending you, was that I feared the temptation of seeing, smelling the fatal poison, would result most disastrously. Is my explanation a sufficient excuse for my rudeness?"

Belle had turned around, and was looking up into the frank, noble face, such a contrast to

her own, on which vanity, insincerity and petty thoughts, had left perceptible traces. She answered, coldly :

“How was I to know this ?”

“I have already confessed that I inferred knowledge which would scarcely be expected of a stranger.”. .


Belle's eyes travelled to the other end of the room where Dr. Lockwood, the only gentleman present, was standing with folded arms, talking to Mrs. Ashworth :

“He must be weak, if he dare not go out to supper.”

“Yes, he is afraid of his own weakness, a phase of fear which is especially despicable.”

Kate's ire was rising again. She was almost losing patience with this pretty cousin of Arthur's.

“Well,” Belle answered quickly, wishing to end a conference which bid fair to result in her own discomfiture, “of course I must accept your apology, though I do not thank you for insulting me in so public a manner. Could you have heard Mr. Rossbach's commiserating explanations of your unladylike treatment of him, you would —”



She stopped suddenly, as her aunt approached with Mrs. Derwent:

"Belle run to the piano and sing something. The ladies are so dull here all alone," Mrs. McDonald said, as she sat down.

Kate waited no longer. Bowing formally to her antagonist, she retreated gracefully from the scene of conflict.

The company soon after broke up. As Kate, muffled and cloaked for her walk home, descended the stairs, Arthur was awaiting her at the foot.

"I wonder if you will let me go with you," he said, as she got within speaking distance. She took one more step nearer him before she answered, but there was not a shadow of a doubt on her bright face:

"You come too late, Mr. McDonald. I have promised Mr. Rossbach the felicity of my presence. . . You should not have been so rash in introducing us," she added, as she noticed his swift look of disappointment.

"I had intended to carry the box of books," he replied, lowering his tone, and drawing back from an advance of cloaked figures.

Her expression did change now, but only a

contraction of her eyebrows, as though for the performance of an unpleasant duty :

"Arthur, I have not accepted them. I earnestly hope you will not be grieved. I cannot put myself under such obligation to any one. I thank you all the more gratefully, however, for your kindness."

"Not accept them as a reminiscence of the past, which seems so vivid just as I am going to sever connection with it?"

His earnestness, blended with deep sadness, perplexed and puzzled her, but not pausing to allow this to influence her, and with the image of Nettie's face ever present before her, as a barrier to a nearer approach to him, she answered, decisively :

"The past needs no such outward symbol to keep its memory vivid and fresh. . . Shall I see you again, before you leave?"

"I think not, unless it be after church Sunday night."

The faint manifestation of pride in his manner roused all hers into action.

Her voice grew cold and indifferent :

"It is not likely we shall have a chance to

speak to each other. You will have to bid farewell to so many friends. So I suppose this is the last time for *our* farewell."

The last time! Oh, the depth of meaning in those words: expressive of so much to be renounced, so much which has made the past what it is—a brightness and joy never expected to come again!

And this last time, which could not have been otherwise than sad, was embittered by reserve, pride and misconception of each other.

The parting was so hurried, so unsatisfying. One clinging handshake—one look. That was all; and Arthur with a clouded brow turned away to bid adieu to his other guests, and Kate with smiles and laughing words joined Mr. Rossbach.

CHAPTER XIV.

SATURDAY EVENING.

"His mind's perplexed. Lost in a gloom of uninspired re-
search,
Meanwhile the heart within the heart
On its own axis restlessly revolves,
Yet nowhere finds the cheering light of truth."
—*Wordsworth's Excursion.*

AFTER all you have said in Young's favor I cannot help considering his writings pernicious in moral influence, and untrue. His belief is dreamlike and shadowy."

"I wish you would mention one tenet of his belief which is without a foundation of solid fact,"

remarked Arthur, as he drew his chair nearer to the fire.

"Well, take his rash assertion that the existence of God cannot be satisfactorily proved. . . Now, Arthur, we all have an idea of something above and beyond ourselves, something infinite and unlimited, something out of reach of ourselves. To me it seems so clear that this is the idea of an infinite and absolute God."

"I am not sure, Nettie, that this idea is as universal as you suppose."

"History will support my assertion. I am reading Christlieb's 'Modern Doubt and Christian Belief,' which Mr. Ellerton loaned me. He says that no one has been able to discover any nation utterly devoid of religious consciousness. In all nations, even the most degraded, there is some conception of a higher being and a feeling of dependence on supernatural power. And don't you remember that Cicero says: 'What people is there or what race of men which has not, even without traditional teaching, some presentiment of the existence of God?' Now that in which all men by nature agree must be true. Theodore Parker has one or two beautiful sentences about this. I must get

the book. . . Yes — here they are. ‘We are conscious of this element within us. We are not sufficient for ourselves; not self-originated, not self-sustained. . . We feel an irresistible tendency to refer all outward things and ourselves with them to a power beyond us, sublime and mysterious. We are led to something higher than ourselves, and greater than all the eyes behold. *Thus, the sentiment of something super-human, comes natural as breath.* . . Now the existence of this religious element, our experience of this sense of dependence, this sentiment of something without bounds, is itself a proof of the existence of its object — something on which dependence rests. A belief in this relation between the feeling in us, and its object independent of us, comes unavoidably from the laws of man’s nature; there is nothing of which we can be more certain.’ Now Arthur, isn’t that true?”

“Pretty good for Parker, Nettie, but you were going to speak again of Christlieb.”

Nettie smiled and laid aside the book:

“He goes on to say that belief in some higher and more powerful being than himself is both a *logical* and moral necessity for man, that human

thought *must* recognize God just as certainly as itself and the world. We cannot get rid of the idea. We do not merely believe that there is a God, but we *know* it because we believe in this very consciousness of ours. This fact, that a direct certainty of God exists in our minds, is considered the simplest refutation of atheism."

"But yet the existence of such a being is not proved satisfactorily to man's reason. It is only inferred," said Arthur, as Nettie paused.

"I should think the witness of our consciousness a stronger proof of reality than the results of tedious, logical processes."

"Yet some minds are content with nothing else. It is their misfortune you know."

"Do you believe that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles?" she asked, looking up.

"Yes, of course."

"Why?"

"Because I have reasoned it out, and I find it true."

"But did you not start with axioms which you did not stop to prove?"

"Yes."

"Then why do you accept the result? You have not proved everything. . Are you not accepting as true what cannot be proved to be true?"

"But these axioms in mathematics are so self-evident —"

"That is just the point, Arthur. You are taking your consciousness as the strongest witness of truth, after all. I think this belief in God is an axiom on which to base all our knowledge. To revert once more to Parker. He says that as God himself is the being of all existence, so the idea of God is the central truth of all other ideas. Take our stand where we may and reason, we come back logically to this which is the primitive fact in all our intellectual conceptions. And Arthur I think that without this belief in God our life here in this world is an enigma, a mystery incapable of being solved — disappointing, weary, hopeless. And without this belief a limit is put upon human progress. Humanity is capable of infinite advancement, you do not deny this — how can it be so if there is not an infinite life beyond this finite, incomplete life, and an infinite father to bestow it upon us?"

A long pause ensued after Nettie's voice had ceased. She had laid aside her sewing and was resting her head on the back of her chair, her eyes closed as if in deep thought. At last she broke the silence by saying :

"It has always seemed to me that, as in nature every animal want is supplied, so there must be something external to ourselves to supply our intellectual and spiritual wants. We surely would not have this intense thirst for God, unless there were a God to satisfy us. We would not long so for immortality unless there is indeed, immortal, deathless life beyond. Oh Arthur," she added, starting up, "Christlieb has such a splendid way of putting the assertion that if the existence of a God cannot be proved, it cannot be disproved, or rather I should say his non-existence cannot be proved. Will you read it if I get the book?"

"Yes — with pleasure, and then I shall have to go. Where is it? Can't I find it?"

"Hardly; it is up-stairs."

She was gone but a moment. As she laid the open book in his hands, he said :

"Derwent was praising up Christlieb the other

day. He's rather skeptical. I think you ought to talk to him, Nettie."

"I did not know he was skeptical, though I know he is very far indeed from being a Christian. He has been quite displeased with Kate because she has refused to sing again in church. She regrets having yielded to his wishes on the night of the missionary meeting."

"Why pray?"

"She says the singing was not sincere. She did not feel the force of the words, nor believe in them. She thinks no one but Christians ought to sing words which affirm faith, love and reverence for Christ."

"She is right there. How really sincere she is! But we are digressing from the subject in question. Shall I begin here at the foot of the page?"

"Before man can say the world is without God, he must first have become thoroughly conversant about the world. He must have searched through the universe of suns and stars, as well as the history of all ages; he must have wandered through the realms of space and time, in order to be able to assert with truth, nowhere has a trace of God been found. He must be acquainted with every

force, for should but one escape him, that very one might be God.

“He must be able to count up with certainty all the causes of existence, for were there one which he did not know, that one might be God.

“He must be in absolute possession of all the elements of truth which form the whole body of our knowledge; for else the one factor which he did not possess might be *just the very truth* that there is a God.

“If he does not know and cannot explain everything that has happened in the course of ages, just the very point he cannot explain may involve the instrumentality of a God. In short, to be able to affirm authoratively that no God exists, a man must be omniscient and omnipresent,—that is he must himself be God; and thereafter all there would be one.”

“Why, that’s splendid, Nettie,” exclaimed Arthur earnestly, as he closed the book. “I must read this, I do believe.”

“Indeed, I hope you will. It should be in every one’s library. You should investigate our side the question as impartially and patiently as possible. You have paid too much attention to the

vague, fruitless reveries, like this 'Young' for example,—men who have no great or glorious message for humanity. A remark of Christlieb's is very notable in this connection. He says that really more faith in authority is needed for the acceptance of the theories of such men, than for believing all the Bible,—in its supernatural inspiration and its miracles. Really, Arthur, with your vaunted freedom from authority —”

“Now Nettie, if you commence to lecture me I shall run.” Arthur interrupted. “I shall have to go anyway,” he added as he looked at his watch, “I have an engagement up town at half-past nine. It is almost that already. How time does pass while talking to you! But this is the last time!”

“I cannot tell how I shall miss you,” replied Nettie, rising. “Our dull life here will be more or less of a blank. What could I do if I had not Kate?”

“And the privilege of hearing her voice in its varied tones of either joyous mirth or tenderness, and of looking into her eyes and attracting her affectionate and unreserved glance in return. Oh Nettie, after all you are highly favored!” He was standing now in the hall, hat in hand. The dim

light did not prevent her noting the cloud which swept over his face. Her voice trembled as she answered, but there was hope, strength in the words:

"I suppose it is poor comfort to tell you not to lose courage. Yet I feel that in some way you too will at some time be in thorough sympathy with each other. It may be years, long years—you may have both passed through suffering and endured many bitter heartaches, but on account of these the final joy will be all the sweeter."

"Thank you, for the expression of your assurance, I wish I could believe with you . . . But I am keeping you standing, and you are tired."

"Don't go, yet; there are so many things I want to talk about . . . Arthur, are you going away still suspicious of Dr. Lockwood's repentance and reformation? I wish I could do something to change your opinion."

"Oh, you little peace-maker! How little you know of the real facts of the case! Be assured that when I see ample proof of his sincerity, I shall be the first to acknowledge it; till then I cannot act contrary to my judgment. If he stands a certain test to-night, to-morrow you will see me

once more his friend. Whether he will be mine, rests with him."

"There is no doubt of his willingness. Have you ever fancied that Kate is annoyed by the sudden withdrawal of your friendship?"

"No; she is not one to condemn some of her friends in fanatic allegiance to others. Yet, why, do you think so?"

"No, I do not. The idea just came into my mind. . . I feel, Arthur, that you do not try to investigate impartially the causes of the change in Dr. Lockwood, hence whatever is apparently anomalous or inconsistent with pre-conceived ideas of his character is hastily judged to be an assumption of virtue, a part acted for the gain of some concealed good."

"I suppose I can't understand this radical change, called conversion, until I myself experience it," said Arthur, smiling down into the earnest face by his side.

"Oh, how I wish you could experience it," she answered, the earnestness deepening in her voice. "I wish you would begin with renewed patience to work out all the problems which you say have hitherto eluded solution. But remember they can-

not all be solved by pure reason. Moral truth often comes first as an experience, or by intuition, afterwards you can argue about it, and become satisfied. . . Become firmly convinced of God's existence, and then investigate the facts of creation. You know the positivist theory that the earth and man on it existed from all eternity, cannot be supported. Man must have had a beginning, because geology tells us that ages ago the earth underwent changes which are incompatible with his existence. Who created him? Then get settled in regard to man's free-will. This includes the reality of evil, and man's responsibility. Then study the doctrines of Christianity. I would go to the fountain-head, Arthur, instead of reading too exclusively the elaborate commentaries of some theologians, who, half the time, do not know what they are trying to prove. They are entangled in cobwebs, spun by their own ignorance. . . I am going to make a request of you. Will you take with you my New Testament, it has the Greek and English text combined. It is well marked, and not in first-class order, but I know you will cherish it for my sake. Now will you read it every day, if only one verse? I am convinced that it will be

in your darkness a light more clear and bright — in the tangled mazes through which your understanding leads you, it will be a guide more sure and steadfast — than all the lights and guides which philosophy can furnish, or man's uninspired intellect point out. Will you, Arthur?"

He hesitated but one moment. Then he put out his hand and took the book, saying as he consigned it to his coat pocket:

"I shall try and remember your request. If not for its own, I shall indeed cherish it for your sake. And in the intervals of my professional reading, I shall adopt the plan of study you propose. I do desire, certainty."

"Yes, this oscillating, unrestful state of your mind is detrimental to true manliness. When you are inclined to adopt one creed because it pleases your poetical fancy, or another because it seems the nearest to your conception of the fitness of things, you will continue to be unhappy and dissatisfied."

"Doubt, is simply a suspension of one's judgment, Nettie."

"Yes, but one can't go through life without forming a judgment more or less decided and un-

changeable in relation to these great questions which concern us so closely."

"You are quite right. But Nettie I must go. I hope I will not be late up-town. Good-bye."..

After a few more words of farewell and wishes for her happiness, he donned his hat, and disappeared into the street.

The moment Nettie closed the door, he began to run swiftly towards home. Arrived there he took his way to the stables, and fitting a key in the door of the carriage-house he softly let himself in. Drawing a match from his pocket, he lit a candle and placing it on a dusty box in one corner, laid his cap and fine broadcloth coat on a chair, and commenced operations.

He took the precaution, however, to transfer Nettie's Bible from one pocket to another.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRIAL.

"Tis true that we are in great danger ;
The greater therefore should our courage be."

—*Shakespeare.*

ABOUT nine o'clock this same evening as Dr. Lockwood emerged from the shadows of the evergreens in front of Dr. Dent's office, he felt his elbow touched from behind, and turning round he could faintly discern the figure of a short, stout man. His face was unrecognizable in the darkness.

"Well, sir, what do you want with me?"

"Are ye Docthur Lockwood?" the man asked.

"Yes; what is your business with me?"

"There is a man very sick up town, an' faix we're afeard he'll die. Can't ye come up and tind him?"

"Certainly. I will get my medicine case. By the way, what is his disease?"

"I don't know. Shure ye had betther be afther fetchin' yer knives an' sich loike."

"Oh! my case of instruments. Wait a moment, and I will be with you."

"What are you after?" asked Dr. Dent as Jack re-entered the office.

"My medicine case. I am going to visit a sick man. His condition is critical and there may not be time to send for a prescription to be made up. I don't suppose I shall be gone long. . . Well, sir, lead on," he added to the man, as he rejoined him.

Down past Myrtle street, along Grand, until they reached the most densely populated portion of the town. Where the streets converged to one point, the man stopped and jerking a lantern from his pocket lit it, then fumbled again in his pocket, bringing from it a torn, soiled bit of paper. Scrutinizing it carefully he mumbled half to himself:

"Fifty-three Green lane — not an extra good

place to be afther takin' a foine giutleman loike yerself."

With these words of apology he resumed his walk. At the corner where the brilliant lights from the "Star and Garter" illumined all the street he stopped again.

"Hev' a drink afore we go further? It's a long way, an' we'll be fagged out."

"No, thank you. We have no time to lose," Lockwood answered, decisively, motioning the man forward. They turned the corner and went on two or three blocks further; then turned once more to the right, till they came to a lane leading back to the tavern. Lockwood had never been here before, consequently was not aware that the lane terminated at that place. The night was dark, the man's lantern shone with dim uncertain gleams.

., Picking their way carefully over mingled stones and garbage, they at last reached a low, half-ruined house with not even the traces of a light shining from any window. The man stopped at the door and gave three knocks. As it was opened from within, the light of his lantern fell upon a wretched,

ragged looking woman, holding a still more miserable and wretched baby in her arms:

“Och! ye spalpeen! an’ it’s late ye are.”

“Whist, Biddy darlint; this is the docthur;” and not deigning to say any more, the man pushed rudely past her and beckoned to Lockwood to follow. Rubbing the film from the glass of the lantern, he led the way through a long, dark corridor — their echoing footsteps being the only noise audible. The corridor ended in a large room in which voices could be distinctly heard.

“You seem to know the way well, even if you had to look at the address,” said Jack, a faint suspicion for a moment entering his mind.

“I tuk yees through me own house, it’s a shorter claner way than outside. We’ll be in Green lane prisintly.”

He turned quickly to the right, and opened a small door which led out again into the open air. Crossing a narrow courtyard to the rear of a large house which to Jack seemed strangely familiar, he opened the door and waited for the doctor to enter. As he did so the door slammed behind them, and his companion instantaneously gave a peculiar, low whistle!

The next moment a small inside door was thrown open, allowing a stream of light to fall on Jack's tall form; and to his amazement the landlord of the "Star and Garter" stood before him.

"Good evenin' doctor, I feel honored to see you after so long time of absence," the 'man said, an ugly smile crossing his face, which he partially concealed by bowing low before his astonished visitor.

"I came to see a sick man here. Take me immediately to him, if you please. Time presses."

"Yes, sir. Come this way. He's in a bad state."

He led the way through several rooms, until to Lockwood's still further astonishment they stopped in one which to him was but too well known — the back parlor of the saloon. It was occupied only by Jem Tiffing, and two other men seated around a table playing cards. With an exclamation of horror he started back, but it was now too late to retreat. The man who had decoyed him hither laid a heavy hand on his arm. Jem jumped to his feet, and seizing a glass from an adjoining table, almost thrust it into Lockwood's face.

"Glad to see ye, doctor. Here drink to old

acquaintance." The next moment the glass was lying broken in fifty pieces at his feet.

"Take me to see that sick man or let me go." The speaker's voice was hoarse with indignation.

"And ain't the sick man afore you?" asked Bill, pointing with a coarse laugh to one of the men sitting by the table, who was in a semi-state of imbecility, induced by drinking heartily of the liquor whose fumes were but too perceptible to Jack's senses. "Parson Ellerton'd say he was sick nigh unto death."

"He's in nade of the knives an' sech loike, I'm a thinkin'," remarked Jack's conductor, Mike, with a meaning wink at the landlord, "Thrate him gintly, darlint doctor, gintly, fur he's soft; baby-loike."

"Wall, wall, boys, stop your foolin'. I want to talk sensibly to the doctor. . . Now doctor we've missed you dreadfully since you got so pious like; you was the life of the place, imparted character and respectability to it. Why, since that parson grabbed you an' made a Christian of you, we hain't had half the custom we had afore, though the place is just as nobby and the needful just as pure. . . We want you back. If ye drink but once,

ye'll do it again, sure ; couldn't help it you know. 'Taint human natur' ; so you'd come back at last to the true home of your soul."

"Ha! ha! good for you Bill!" laughed Jem, giving the landlord a hearty slap on the shoulder which was acknowledged by a patronizing smile. "Well, doctor, you see it's for our interest to want you to drink. There ain't no use denying *that* ; 'taint in human natur' not to, you know. An' so I'm going to mix as savory a glass of punch as this ere house affords, an' if ye can resist its fascination ye'll be a thorough milksop, and no mistake."

"A pious, psalmy milksop!" echoed Jem as Bill entered the bar-room.

Lockwood was already faint from surprise, indignation, and a nervous fear for his own constancy of purpose. The very mention of the punch sent the blood in swift motion through his system. His brain whirled dizzily ; the memory of his Christian vows, of his duty, of his promises to God, all seemed obscured by this present overwhelming desire. And yet when Bill reappeared, he had retained sufficient moral strength to motion the proffered glass peremptorily away.

"Do you realize what you are doing, wretch?" he said fiercely. "Let me go, or I will use my instruments in self-defence."

He gave Jem a heavy blow and started for the door, but Mike again confronted him:

"Whist! not so fast me friend. Kape yer temper. Here boys!" He seized one arm and Bill the other, and pinioned them to his side. Then Jem took up the glass and held it to his face:

"There! smell how good it is! Here taste it," (he rubbed some on Jack's tightly-closed lips) "Open that mouth o' yourn; haint ye abstained long enough, chickey? Lay him on his back, boys, an' I'll fix him all right."

While all this was going on, these men were unconscious that a strangely attired man with heavy black whiskers all over the lower part of his face, and a large hat drawn closely down over his eyes, had entered the bar-room, and was looking at them through the thin curtains separating the two rooms. As Jem dashed the whiskey on the lips of his helpless victim, the stranger involuntarily took hold of the curtain as if to enter, but recollecting that prudence was necessary, he started back. What could he do against four

strong men, made savage and desperate by drink, and the vehemence of their own passions?

"Now, doctor will you drink it — say, will you?"

Lockwood shook his head. He would not venture to speak, for Jem stood near him.

"Here boys, lie him on the sofa. I told ye them larned fellows had a mighty deal o' pluck. They're as stubborn as asses, an' this ain't a bad specimen, eh, Mike? My! has he fainted?"

"Och an' did yees iver see the loike iv that? He's moighty pale. . . I say docthur — docthur!"

No answer.

He had indeed fainted. They laid him, not ungently, on the sofa, and at a motion from Bill, Mike and Jem drew open the rigid lips, while he poured no small quantity of brandy through them. The strong liquor was swallowed involuntarily. Unconsciously Dr. Lockwood had broken his pledge.

The operation was repeated again and again as he revived, until he had taken enough brandy to thoroughly intoxicate. Their object accomplished Bill and Jem put a pillow underneath his head, and left him to himself.

As Bill went back to the bar-room, he noticed

the stranger leaning on the counter, his face towards the entrance door.

"Beg pardon, sir; been waiting long?" he queried, going behind.

"Yes, I came in a while ago, and owing to the disturbance inside, my entrance was doubtless unnoticed."

"I ordered my chap to tend the bar, but he's off some'ers I suppose. What ken I do for you?"

"Give me some whiskey and water."

"Where d'ye hail from?" asked Bill, curiously, as he turned towards the brilliantly decorated bottles on the shelves behind. "Seems to me I've seen ye before. Was you ever in here?"

"Yes, I was in here over two months ago, enquiring for the residence of a former acquaintance of mine, Dr. John Lockwood. What do you know of him now, is he thoroughly reformed?"

The redness in the man's face deepened noticeably, and he gave an almost startled glance into the other room.

"Can't say about his reformin'. He haint been here since you was here, until to-night. He came in nigh a half-hour past, and now he's drunk as a hatter in there. Ye see the fascination of this

'ere place was too much. Tain't in human natur' to resist, you know. . . He likes brandy — brandy in the raw; ha! ha! that's what's made him drunk."

"Who's drunk?" questioned a gentleman who the moment before had swung open the baize door.

"Ah, Mr. Percival? glad to see you," answered the bar-man, with a familiar nod. "It's Dr. Lockwood, your old companion, in the good times here. Go home and tell your ma, an' all them pious folks in the parson's church, that he has put on again the bonds of iniquity, an' come back eager to the gall of bitterness."

The stranger frowned, as Bill's coarse laugh grated on his ears; while Mr. Percival exclaimed languidly:

"You don't say so, now, really? I'll not believe you unless I see him."

"Come in here then." Bill lifted up the curtain.

"Well, my stars! it's so, really. I guess the people will have to look into this. A bad job, I declare."

"Be careful that you tell no half truths, for they are often the most deceptive falsehoods," said

the stranger in a muffled, but earnest tone, drawing his hat closer over his eyes.

“What, do you mean to insinuate, sir, that I am a liar?” exclaimed Percival, starting indignantly back.

“Not at all. I only advise you to investigate the matter closely before you rush into some of the hot-beds of gossip in this town. There has been foul play here to-night, and should I hear of any scandal detrimental to Mr. Lockwood’s name, I am ready to explain to the complete satisfaction of the most prejudiced and uncharitable, that the lamentable condition in which you now see him, is not owing to his own voluntary, and free action.”

In his earnestness, the gentleman’s voice had not only risen, but completely changed in both accent and tone. Percival eyed him in astonishment and curiosity :

“Who are you, sir ? I feel sure I never saw you before, but your voice is familiar.”

“It matters not who I am, except a friend of all who are in need of friends,” the stranger answered in his former manner. Then he turned towards the bar-keeper : “I have witnessed all your infamous actions to-night, and I demand that you give

up Dr. Lockwood to my care. I will take him home."

"But he can't walk, he's that drunk." The man in spite of the confusion arising from detection laughed gleefully.

"I have a sleigh outside. Bid some of the men in there to assist him into it."

"Bring him in yourself," answered Bill, defiantly. "What right have you to bully *us*?"

"The right of befriending a helpless victim of your own devilish wickedness."

"Ketch me givin' him up to the likes of you." Bill stuck his thumbs into his vest pockets, and planted himself firmly on his heels. He looked the very personification of self-satisfied villany and brutal defiance.

"Will you help me?" The stranger turned towards Percival.

"We two couldn't fight them — besides the game ain't worth the candle. Let him be. He'll come to."

"I think you will hardly dare to refuse me now." The stranger threw his hat across the room, impatiently jerked off the scarf which had been folded tightly around his neck; the next moment the

black whiskers were lying in a little heap on the floor, and Arthur McDonald, with flashing, indignant face, stood unexpectedly revealed to their astonished eyes.

"My stars what an idea!" ejaculated Percival. But Bill Kemp had apparently shrunk into half his former size, while chagrin, fear and brutal curiosity were most amusingly blended in his whole expression. Under Arthur's stern gaze his eyes fell, and his hands shook perceptibly, as he seized some whiskey and swallowed it convulsively.

"Are you ready to do my bidding?" demanded Arthur, haughtily, after a moment's impressive silence. . .

"I beg your pardon, your honor, I didn't know you was you when I was so uncivil to ye: Jem, Mike, here. Confound you Jem, you're drunk! Here Mike, help me lift the doctor into the sleigh outside. . .

"An' Mr. McDonald, I hope you'll keep quiet about this here little affair," Bill added persuasively, as Arthur was preparing to depart.

"I shall have it fully published in the morning papers," Arthur answered, not unwilling, to excite the man's cowardly fears.

"People will be shy of coming near such a dangerous place as this, where one's liberty of choice and action is grossly insulted. They will have too selfish a regard for their own safety. You may anticipate quite a falling off of customers. Respectable people will no longer patronize you."

"I'll give you twenty dollars to keep your mouth shut," exclaimed Bill, seizing his arm.

"What power have your paltry dollars over *me*," answered Arthur, scornfully, shaking off Bill's hold.

"Well, say fifty; and an oath to never try it on the doctor again."

"You have done, perhaps, irreparable injury to him already. . . Yes, I'll accept your offer. No I won't either."

"Stay, stay, Mr. McDonald," called out Bill.

"Stay, Oh! stay, me darlin', stay!" echoed Jem in a drunken drawl.

"Well, you must give a written promise," said Arthur, deigning to come back, "and Percival shall witness it. If ever it is broken, I will have your license taken from you. Be assured, I have the power."

Before Arthur took up the reins, he tucked the

fur robes around the prostrate form lying on the front seat of the sleigh, and pushed back the clinging hair around the forehead, ere he drew over it his own fur cap which he had carried in his pocket. The next moment the horses were dashing at a headlong speed in the direction of home. Arrived there, he drove directly to the stables. In answer to his call, his servant came to his side.

"Jump in Pat, and drive to Mrs. Brown's boarding-house. My fingers are cold. I went away without gloves."

"Och! an' did ye ever see the loike, iv that?" Pat exclaimed, as his eye fell on the other occupant of the sleigh.

"Hush! He has been injured. If you wish to retain your place, say nothing to any one." . .

"Hitch the horses, Pat," he ordered, as they drew up before Mrs. Brown's door, and he sprang out and knocked loudly. To the woman who opened the door, he gave the same explanation he had given to Pat. Not without much trouble to himself, and with no small amount of "blowing," and suppressed ejaculations from Pat, did they succeed in placing Dr. Lockwood in the bed in his own room.

"Here, wait a minute!" called out Arthur, as Pat was going away. He seized a slip of paper lying on the table, and drawing a pencil from his pocket, scribbled these lines:

"Dear Mother:

"I shall not be home to-night. I am going to stay with Jack. I shall ask him to dinner, to-morrow. I write for fear you wonder what has become of me.

"Affectionately,

"ARTHUR."

"Here, give this to Mary, to hand to Mrs. McDonald, immediately. If she has retired, it can remain over till morning."

"The ladies hadn't gone to bed whin we lift, bekase I was in the kitchen wid Norah, and Miss Eva wint out fur a jug iv hot water for the misthriss."

"The off-horse travels a little lame, Pat. Look into the matter, and remember my orders to maintain strict silence, even to Norah, mind."

"All right yer honor," laughed Pat, and the next moment he was lumbering down-stairs.

All through the long, weary hours Arthur sat

by Jack's bedside, alternately listening to his dull, heavy breathing, or watching his violent, restless tossings to and fro.

He could not control his mind to read any of the scientific works scattered around the room; and it was not until an hour had flown by, in which thoughts of Jack and Nettie, and anxious, sadder thoughts of one still dearer to his heart, had mingled and blended in his mind, that he remembered Nettie's Bible. It was still in his overcoat pocket.

As he opened it on his knee, the inscription on the fly-leaf caught his eye:

"ARTHUR McDONALD,

with the best wishes of his friend,

NETTIE BURTON."

Then underneath, were quoted those exquisite lines from Keble's "Christian Year:"

"And well it is for us our God should feel

Alone our secret throbbings; so our prayer

May readier spring to heaven, nor spend its zeal

On cloud-born idols of this lower air,

“For if our heart in perfect sympathy
Beat with another, answering love for love,
Meek mortals, all entranced, on earth would lie,
Nor listen for those purer strains above.”

As he turned over the leaves aimlessly, glancing at the verses around which her hand had traced delicate marks, and wondering of what self-experience they were the symbol, the time passed more rapidly. At last a coherent question from Jack arrested his attention:

“Arthur, is that you?”

“Yes, old fellow,” he answered, jumping up, and going to the bedside.

“Where have I been? Am I sick?”

“No, only slightly dazed in the head, which used to be not an uncommon condition with you.”

“Dazed? why man! you don’t—I haven’t really?—”

“Yes, you have. But it wasn’t one bit your fault. I saw it all.”

“Oh, it was awful! But how did *you* happen to be *there*?”

“I’ll tell you some other time. It’s a long story. Do you want a glass of water?”

“Yes, please. I am so thirsty... And you

brought me home, I suppose. Arthur you're a brick?"

"I always knew I was. All the girls tell me so, and as they never speak aught but the truth, of course the veracity of the dictum is unquestionable."

Jack smiled, but very faintly:

"How my head does ache! and I feel as if I could drink up the whole river."

"Well, drink a pitcher full to begin with, and don't be so wide-reaching in your desires. I ordered madame Brown to brew a strong cup of coffee. I have tried to keep it hot on the stove. Drink it all. It's a good antidote to that villanous brandy. And now turn over and try to sleep. Your other snooze was only a sample of what you are capable; and I'll have a nap in my chair."

"But just this first. What did Mrs. Brown say?"

"Oh, I told her you had fainted and would soon be all right. That was true."

In obedience to Arthur, Jack remained quiet, though he slept little. He felt nervous, weak, depressed.

About eight o'clock Arthur awoke with a start, as Mrs. Brown's shrill bell rang warningly through the house.

"Won't you stay to breakfast?" Jack asked, as he looked around for his overcoat.

"No, thank you. I feel a little in need of my own coat, not to mention a clean collar and cuffs. I've got Pat's Sunday-go-to-meetin' coat on, and no cuffs at all, at all. Don't I cut a comical figure?"

He turned around several times for inspection. Jack laughed heartily:

"What in the world are you in that rig for, any way?"

"In that lies all the thrilling interest of the tale. Can't explain now. Are you going to church?"

"I shall try. . . I feel as though all the old desires which I had hoped were asleep, have awakened in renewed strength ready to fight me."

"But you will not fall under their sway again, Jack. Don't fear. . . I did not intend to go to church, but I can just as well. I'll call around for you, and then you must come home with me to dinner. After we have gossiped with my fair

cousins, we'll have a confidential confab in my study."

"All right, and thanks."

"Oh don't mention it, yer honor."

The next moment after a jump or two downstairs, Arthur was saying good-morning to Mrs. Brown, as she opened for him the front door.

CHAPTER XVI.

RECONCILIATION.

"It is certain my belief gains quite infinitely the moment I can convince another soul thereof.—*Novalis*.

IT is a proof of your willingness to forgive me for my unmanly distrust of you that you enter my study once more," said Arthur, rolling an easy chair towards his guest.

"I have nothing to forgive. Your distrust was most natural, and its non-concealment but an instance of your manly sincerity."

“Thank you. I feel however that I owe you an explanation. I wish also to frankly confess that the solution of one side of the puzzle does not throw light on the other. . . I said to myself that if I found that you for a certain time had successfully resisted all the fascinations of that brilliant saloon and its adherents, I would consider you sincere in your reformation. I need not disguise from you that I doubted it. Well, one evening after I heard of your conversion, I fixed myself up and paid a visit to the elysium in question, and had the good fortune to overhear the discussion of the scheme for your abduction which was accomplished last night. I put the date down in my pocket-book. Resolved to see the consummation of the plot, I determined to revisit the place in the same disguise, because I did not wish to be known as ever having been there. I arrived in time to see you refuse the punch. I admired your pluck, Jack, and wished I could save you from the subsequent humiliation, but I knew those fellows would not submit to any dictation from an obscure stranger. I had to reveal who I was, however, before they would let me bring you away. . . Oh I do wish you could have

seen that Bill Kemp's cowardice ! It was so amusing to hear him beg me not to tell about the affair. Of course I intend to say nothing unless people hear about it, and I consider it necessary to vindicate you, but I represented to him that I would publish it in the *Courier*. Ha — ha ! You should have seen and heard him."

Jack, in spite of his despondency, could not forbear joining in Arthur's mirth. When they once more subsided into gravity, Arthur resumed :

"Now Lockwood, I have satisfactory proof that for three months you have kept your vow of abstinence. It must have been hard to resist all these multiform influences. None regret more than I, that one great temptation against which you had to fight, was caused by my mother's mistaken ideas of hospitality the other evening. And yet I cannot reconcile your conduct with what you said to me that last time we talked together."

"Then that is really what you have remembered all these months !" exclaimed Jack eagerly, leaning forward. "How I have puzzled over this ! You thought that I signed the pledge intending to keep it only a short time, in order to

win the respect of both Nettie Burton and Kate Wallace, or of other friends?"

"Yes," answered Arthur, "you said so, you remember."

"But I was not in earnest, boy. I am always saying things in fun which —"

"How was I to know that, when your action followed so closely your apparent resolution?"

"I know it was wrong to jest about such sacred matters. The result has taught me a lesson which I shall not be slow to remember. . . I cannot *explain* my motives in becoming a Christian, Arthur. I felt so miserable, so disgusted with myself, so hopeless of my own strength, that when I met Mr. Ellerton, and he urged me to take Christ's strength instead of my own to build up a better and nobler manhood from out of the ruined fragments of nobleness left in my own nature, it seemed that all my unbelief, doubt and proud assumption of knowledge superior to the Christian religion could no longer be endured. . . I really do not believe an idea of what others would think ever entered my head. It was only my own insufficiency and Christ's wonderful completeness, my own weakness and frailty and his divine

strength and perfection, my own blindness and ignorance, and his infinite knowledge and wisdom. These placed in juxtaposition made the contrast distinct, almost appalling. Do you believe me, Arthur?"

"Yes, Jack. Though you can't blame me for not understanding it all."

"No, I blame you for nothing. I think you are as sincere in your skepticism as I am in my faith. And yet I cannot promise to you the happiness nor the safety in your skepticism which there is in my faith. However I feel sure that you will finally emerge into a clear, more sunlit atmosphere; the mists and fogs of unbelief forever the experiences of the past."

"Thank you for your hopeful prophecy. It does not seem to me that I could ever believe the dogmas of Christianity without a silent protest against their validity."

"You do not know what fresh insight you may gain. You're young yet. When you come back to Belmont again, we know not what changes will have occurred in you, and in ourselves."

"That is true," Arthur answered, an expression of pain contracting his features. "There

are possible changes of which I dread to think. . . But Jack, tell me how you are getting on in your practice ;” and with an effort he turned a smiling face towards his companion.

“Exceedingly well. My friends here have been kind in trusting me, and their influence upon others has been decisive. But if they hear that I was at the ‘Star and Garter,’ and especially that I was carried helplessly home I don’t know what the effect will be. Only two days ago Dr. Dent said he thought he would give up his practice in Woodbridge to me, and confine himself exclusively to our own town. This will involve much fatigue in driving, late hours and hard work ; but I am only anxious for that. I want to make up for lost time.”

“Why, that’s unusual luck for a young fellow like you, Jack. It will bring you in a nice little sum per annum. Then think of the honor. You will be married by the time I come back. That will be one of the changes.”

“I think not. There are very few roses left in this garden which would lift their heads to be picked by me.”

Arthur laughed.

"I haven't seen many pickers, lately. The roses bloom in sweetness, waiting."

"I do not flatter myself that there are no obstacles to stay my rash hand."

"What obstacles?" asked Arthur, with an earnestness which the jesting nature of the subject did not demand.

"Why, to drop the figure which is becoming rather inconvenient, do you suppose that the person I might wish to win could be won easily?"

"No doubt of it, you are exceptionally fine-looking."

"Stop your nonsense!" Jack jumped up and seizing Arthur's arms shook him violently.

"Hold! that's enough. Sit down again, I'll talk sensibly. . . I am glad the old doctor is going to retire. He is getting rather *passé*, not thoroughly up in modern notions. I think his patients ought to be glad to have the substitute of a fresh, clear-headed, strong fellow like you. You will be having the whole practice before long."

"But if he hears of last night's adventure he will rescind his resolution without doubt. He said expressly that only on condition that I kept my pledge would he entrust me with the responsi-

bility. I am really inclined to tell him the whole truth," Lockwood added, thoughtfully.

"It would be the most straightforward thing to do after all," Arthur said after a pause. "I wish I could go with you, but after church I must spend this evening home with my mother. However if you wish my testimony any time, just write to me, and I will send satisfactory evidence."

"You are a good fellow, McDonald."

"That's no news Jack. Every one tells me that, you know. Can't you say something original?"

"Nothing, except that I am sorry you are going away just as I am getting you back into my heart, or rather I am getting back into yours. . . My feelings for you never changed."

The tears came into Arthur's eyes, but he said nothing.

"I wish," continued Jack, as he rose to go, "I wish you would promise me one thing."

"What is that?"

"Read the Bible. It will be your best guide. Will solve most satisfactorily the most intricate life-problems, giving you a purer philosophy than any obtainable from baser literature, and, best of

all, imparting to your heart in whatever trials and sorrows it experiences, relief, and courage."

"I have already promised Nettie Burton, and she has given me her own Bible. Therefore it is not difficult for me to strengthen my resolution by granting your request, Jack. Thank you very much for your interest in me. If you find rest and certainty in your religion, after all the tossing doubt which used to trouble you, I wish I could believe as you do. Be assured I do not court the reputation of being a skeptic. I feel it forced upon me by the constitution of my mind. I think it should be a cause of regret, but I shall never cease to give my doubts a courteous hearing, nor endeavor to stifle their voices."

"By doing so is your sole chance for faith."

"Yes, I feel sure of it. Religion is not worth much unless it can stand onslaughts of logic and human metaphysics. God could not have given us this faculty of reason to be useless and unemployed. It has a great work to do."

"But the no less honorable faculties of conscience and faith must also be thoroughly exercised. There must be harmony in the whole intellectual and moral constitution."

"Certainly. . . You will burn your coat, Jack, that fire is hot."

"I was not aware I had got so near it. But I must go. . . I spend a while every Sunday afternoon at Mr. Wallace's. He's a fine man to talk to, clear-headed, acute, and no humbug about him."

"Just like his daughter. I suppose you like to talk to her, too?"

Lockwood's eyes did not shrink from Arthur's scrutiny.

"Yes. Kate has remarkably fresh and original ideas about everything. She is rather wilful too. Just enough to make conversation piquant, and charming. Its about time for Sunday-school to be out. I guess I can overtake her. Good-bye, Arthur."

There were not unmanly tears in the eyes of both as they shook hands closely. . .

"I wish you would tell Nettie and Kate that I have become once more your friend," said Arthur huskily. "The extent of your information must be regulated by your judgment."

"I will, answered Jack; and with another hand-clasp he was gone.

It was well for his equanimity that he could

not see the interior of the little study five minutes after he had left. The deep sadness on Arthur's dark, grave face would have grieved and perplexed him.

With regret for the parting, but keen joy and delight because of the restored confidence and trust and friendship, *his* face bright with happy thoughts, he met Kate just as she was turning the corner of the street.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PARTING.

"He sees when their footsteps falter, when their hearts grow faint and weak."

THE sermon this evening was as solemn and earnest as ever, but the words fell unheeded on at least two of the congregation. Kate was in her usual place in the gallery—the McDonald's pew right on a line with the pulpit in front of her. . . Her eyes covered by her left hand seldom left the back of Arthur's head, as he sat with his

usual dignity upright, looking at the preacher. The idea most dominant in her mind was that this was the last time he would be there for months. Perhaps he would never come back.

In the words of the final hymn :

“Nearer my God to thee
E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,”

Nettie heard the strong voice at her side grow silent, and looking up hastily was surprised to see the blended perplexity and sadness on her face. The words had assumed to Kate a meaning which they had not before. Though longing for nearness to God, for reconciliation and forgiveness, she yet felt unwilling to attain these conditions by means of personal affliction—the endurance of heavy crosses. She felt to-night that the earthly happiness denied to her, being so much more tangible, more befitting her present need, would be more satisfying than the, to her, more remote, more intangible joys of an heavenly life. If God demanded this sacrifice of her she would not—but there Kate's ideas were formless. . . So for the first time arose in her heart *conscious* and *intentional* rebellion towards the religion of Christ,

though her previous course of life and thought had not been sincere allegiance to its principles or divine requirements.

Arthur's thoughts were, too, on the coming parting, the separation from the home of his childhood, his mother and the many dear friends he loved so well. He felt he had already parted from Kate; that parting was a grave in which his dearest hopes had been buried, while the coming years would but cover them over with the mould and dust of unavailing regrets. The sound of her voice from the gallery — full, firm and sweet, seemed mocking his grief. When all through the final hymn it was silent, he turned around for the first time and looked up, but her head just then was bowed to receive the benediction, hence he missed the sight of her face. But as he held open the pew-door for Mrs. McDonald and Eva to pass out, he caught her eye fastened on him. . . As he passed under the gallery he bowed. A bright smile illumined her face like the sunlight which breaks from behind gloomy rain-clouds. Answering brightness flashed back to her. For a moment their relation to each other seemed all joy, happi-

ness and gladness; the next moment they were both conscious that whatsoever of gladness or happiness they had experienced was existent but in memory, to be an object of retrospection, not of expectation or hope.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE COLLISION.

"There is no disappointment we endure,
One-half so great as that we are to ourselves."

—*Bailey's Festus.*

THE animosity between Kate and Belle Forrester did not tend to diminish, as the days flew by. Their natures seemed essentially antagonistic, and no chemical element had yet been discovered to force them into harmony.

One afternoon, about a month after Arthur's departure, Belle was the centre of a group of girls who had thronged around her the moment of the breaking up of the Latin class.

Her dashing city manners, her pretty face, and

her fearless, often unprincipled courage, had caused her society to be sought, and a deference paid to her opinions, quite unprecedented in the democratic school-world. . . Her desire for flattery and admiration made her choose to be conciliating and condescending — a manifestation of character quite foreign to her real love of domination and power. She dazzled the weak judgments of some of the pupils, others feared, some disliked her.

“It’s a perfect, perfect shame!” she exclaimed emphatically, to Grace Dawson, one of her closest “shadows.”

“That’s so, Belle Forrester. The idea that *we* are not to have a holiday, when all the rest of the town will! Why, even the shops are to be closed. A man who’s lived sixty years in one place, doesn’t die every day.”

“Let’s all agree not to come to school, and go down the river for an elegant lark of some kind. What do you say, girls? Do you think we could manage it?”

“It would be good fun!” answered one of the conspirators.

“My! I guess so!” exclaimed another. “Let’s do it. But we must all be agreed, though. Edith,

where is Nettie Burton? We must have her consent, because she is not exactly a teacher you know, and we couldn't keep the scheme from her."

"You needn't always lug her in, Amy Warton. You know very well she'd throw cold water on the whole affair. The pious hypocrite!"

Kate's blue eye flashed:

"Miss Forrester as you have not yet recovered from the depressing disease of being jealous of Nettie because she has the misfortune to know a few more Latin verbs than your august self, you had better not allow your jealousy to exceed your discretion."

The only thing of which Belle seemed to be afraid was Kate's sarcasm. If she had been aware of Kate's presence, she certainly would not have invited this attack. Her habit had been to endeavor to alter the current of opinion of Nettie's character when no champion courageous or unselfish enough to vindicate the assailed character, was ever present. She made no reply. At that moment Nettie was perceived coming out of a little room opening into the long school-room. Her cloak tossed over the left arm, indicated that

her duties were done, and she was preparing to go home.

"Nettie Burton, come here!" called out several voices; and at the quick command she joined the eager group, each moment increasing. "We are thinking of insisting on having a holiday to-morrow," explained Amy.

"How can it be brought about?" queried Nettie, seating herself on a chair.

"We could refuse to recite, and stick it out," put in Miss Forrester.

"Or run away and have a good time," added another.

"I say Net, don't you think it is unjust to have lectures?" asked Edith Mason, a young lady of twenty, Kate's most formidable antagonist in the graduating class.

"Yes—I think it is," answered Nettie. "I should be very glad to be released from lecturing. But I do not believe you could carry out your plan."

"Are you afraid of the consequences?"

The insult lurking in Belle's tone brought a flush to Nettie's cheek, but she answered nothing.

"Well, come to the point at once, and don't be so stubborn about your opinions."

"I am not aware that I have yet offered them for your approval," Nettie replied, turning her beautiful dark eyes upon the speaker, while the expression of her face was anything but "stubborn"—grave indeed, but the outline of every feature, the upward curve of the delicate lips showed a keen perception and appreciation of innocent merriment.

"Although you could all stand together, it would not be pleasant to get into trouble with Prof. Green. Then such a wholesale stampede, such as the one proposed, does not appear to me to be practicable at all. There are contingencies of getting cold, etc., which would entail your return home—hence, ignoble discovery. And finally, it would not be right."

Several of the girls were heard to say, "That's so!" But Miss Forrester turned round and silenced them with an angry look, accompanied by the words:

"There, I told you she wouldn't agree to anything we proposed. For that reason I did not

wish her told anything about it. She always wants to lead."

"I am conscious that I did not court the extreme honor shown me by having been asked for my opinion so stubbornly withheld," replied Nettie sarcastically, almost losing control of herself.

"Well, you weren't always so particular before you got so pious. I well remember years ago you got into an ugly scrape."

Some of the girls tittered and glanced meaningly at each other. Such a pained, surprised expression swept across Nettie's face; but she said nothing, although the effort to keep back the sharp words struggling to her lips required resolute strength of will. Miss Forrester, encouraged by the sympathies of her hostile party continued:

"Right is a pretty shield to get behind. Of course we know that if it wasn't—"

"I would humbly suggest to your august majesty that the subjunctive 'if' requires the plural form of the verb. It would be well to imitate the enemy's example in the choice of pure English," interrupted Kate, pointedly.

Belle bit her lip and resumed:

"If it *were* not for gaining some influence, or

getting more popular, you would not be so opposed to breaking the rules."

Nettie gave no testimony how deeply these rude, unkind words grieved her, but leaning back in her chair and looking up into Belle's cloudy face, she said simply:

"The subject is hardly worth so much talking and contention, therefore you need say nothing further to me about your plans. Nor is it either necessary or profitable to enter into an analysis of my motives.

The firm dignity of the words showed that her forbearance was due to no passivity of feeling, that her high-spirited nature could resent a wrong without the display of any unchristian irritation.

"If you wish me to request from the principal the holiday you so desire, I shall be willing to do so," she continued, after a moment's pause. But I cannot sanction —"

"I think," interrupted Amy Warton, "that some plan must be found without cutting recitations."

"That's right; be ruled by an insignificant —"

"But Miss Forrester was prevented from completing her sentence by a hand grasping her arm

tightly, and an angry voice close beside her, saying abruptly:

“Belle Forrester, if you are a lady, which is extremely doubtful, refrain from speaking further. Miss Burton (I will not insult her by uttering her first name in your hearing) Miss Burton does well to refuse co-partnership with any of your unworthy and infamous schemes for the perversion of our sense of what is right and becoming. If you, or any girls who are weak and vacillating enough to be ruled by your principles, decide to desert lectures to-morrow, or in any way infringe the rules which have hitherto been cheerfully obeyed, be assured that I shall be under the painful necessity of informing the teachers thereof.”

Belle turned, and for a moment looked steadily into Kate's eyes flashing with passionate anger and sarcastic scorn. The girls almost held their breath as they noted the expression of intense hatred and humiliated pride cross her face.

“We are enemies then?” she asked huskily.

“Yes, now and forever, unless you beg Miss Burton's pardon, and in other ways annul the injury you have done her.”

"I do not desire her pardon. You will please remove your hand." No more was said, and gradually, almost in silence, the group of conspirators dispersed.

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It was not until the two friends reached the Wallace's gate that either spoke.

"Come home with me, Kate. I have so much sewing, and we can have a long talk over it."

"All right. I believe I will. Wait till I get my thimble. . . How you ever manage to prepare your lectures in Latin so well when you have so much else to do, is a wonder to me," Kate added, when they were once more on the street.

"This morning I decided I would have to give up my classes. They are too great a strain on my strength. To sew till ten o'clock, and then study afterwards in addition to my other work is troubling me with hard headaches. And in the morning I hardly feel bright enough to brush the mould off Latin roots."

"Poor Pussie! I wish I could help you."

"How much you help me you are not aware.

Besides for my sake you have made an implacable enemy this afternoon."

"What a spit-fire I was, as Tom Tulliver would call me! I am very sorry I could not control myself. Ever since she came to school that girl has annoyed me by her conceit and assumption of superiority. I avoided making her acquaintance as long as I could, because I distrusted my powers of endurance. To-day all my bottled wrath escaped with a bang."

"Is there none left?"

"I wonder when I shall be able to settle down into a demure, even-tempered personage," said Kate, not heeding the question. "Never, I fear, until I lose my individuality, which at present is so troublesome."

"I never want you to be different from now darling, except —"

"Except a little less quick tempered. On that unfortunate quality hangs all my grief. I can't subdue it. It is impossible. How hard I have tried no one has any conception."

The weary, despairing tone touched Nettie's warm heart. She gave the arm on which her hand was resting a sympathetic squeeze.

"Oh Kate, we all have burdens heavy to be borne. I think those are the heaviest which are made by the weight of our own sins. There is but one way to have them lightened."

But the friends had by this time reached Nettie's home. . . As they entered the sitting-room a fretful complaining voice greeted them.

"I wonder you can loiter on the way home Nettie, when I am almost crazy with so much to do. How do you do, Kate? Excuse me from getting up."

Mrs. Burton sat surrounded by fragments of some old dresses which she had been ripping; Sarah by her side was engaged in brushing off the dust, and sorting them into order. The room looked dreary and forlorn; the afternoon sunlight shining through the half-closed blinds, making every object look dusty, faded and coarse. . . With a stifled sigh Nettie picked up the basket of unmended garments, and signifying to Kate to follow, led the way up-stairs.

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Kate was one of those who either from pride or unselfishness conceal their deepest thoughts

and feelings in the silent reserve of their own hearts. We know that there was deep sadness in her heart, even while outwardly manifesting real sincere mirth and enthusiasm. These two mental conditions are not necessarily antagonistic.

As the finest music is that through which pathos runs in subdued, half unheard undertones, yet blending beautifully with the dominant joy, so those are the finest characters that reveal to the unsympathetic scrutiny of others no more of their personal, most sacred experiences, than is unavoidable. With characteristic decision, Kate had resolved that if she could help it, no one should ever imagine her secret grief on account of the necessary estrangement from Arthur McDonald, nor be troubled by her unrest of heart because of her vivid consciousness of failures in life and conduct which she knew were displeasing to God. Pride and unselfish love for Nettie had been the motives of this reserve. But during the last few days the tumult of rebellion against what she had considered God's unjust requirements and unloving assumption of authority, had been merged in a strong, absorbing desire for the redemption which was alone in his power to bestow. She

could no longer complain of lack of earnestness. It seemed that nothing else could give her mind rest, nothing else satisfy the large, boundless capacities for happiness in her nature. It seemed as though the very disappointment caused by the denial of an earthly love which she valued—disappointment against which she had struggled, and reasoned, and resolved in vain, made her long the more for that heavenly love, without which she knew she could have no enduring peace or happiness.

In spite of her sincere desire to have all reserve on this subject removed, her perplexity and dissatisfaction had been concealed from Nettie. But now she was very impatient, and annoyed with herself because of the signal failure in maintaining dignified self-control this afternoon. This with the effects of the reaction from past excitement, and severe tension of the nervous system during a long competitive recitation in mathematics, made it impossible to be outwardly joyous when there was no cheerfulness within to support it. She soon grew silent and absent-minded, the corners of the firm, decided mouth drooping wearily, and Nettie whose watchful eyes

noted every expression of her face, wondered at the change. In her laying down her work sewing, she seized the hands which were working so fast, even hurriedly, in the long seam of Mrs. Burton's morning-dress, and said hesitatingly:

"Kate, darling, tell me what troubles you?"

Kate started nervously and did not answer.

"You are not yourself to-day. . . I am sorry you suffer in being my brave champion."

"It isn't that at all," Kate answered, a great lump running into her throat which made her voice husky and broken. "I don't regret getting myself into trouble, but I was so unkind so discourteous! . . . Oh Nettie! I am so miserable."

With an inconceivable burst of tears she buried her face in Nettie's lap. The latter, with delicate tact, wisely forbore to question her just then; she only patted the bowed head and smoothed the masses of brown hair. . . Very soon the reins were once more in Kate's hands, her feelings in complete control. But she did not raise her head. It was so delightful there, she thought, with her darling's arm around her.

"I am very incautious to let my nose and eyes get so red, just when I want to look my best and

brightest before you," she said at last, without looking up. "I am always such a fright."

"If crying makes you a fright, then you are not often that indefinite thing or person, for you seldom indulge in the luxury. You keep your sorrows bottled up more securely than your wrath. But I wish Kate I knew what makes you unhappy. There should be no secrets between us."

"But it will trouble you."

"It would trouble me far more to be kept in suspense."

"I know it. . . Well Nettie, I am so unsettled. I feel I ought to love Christ, and I cannot. I try to —"

"The voice stopped suddenly, its clear fearless tones subdued by an unaccountable reserve. Nettie raised Kate's head and looked searchingly into her eyes. Then she spoke :

"You say you believe in Christ, that he came to die for you, that he is able to forgive your sins, to endow you with the divine gift of eternal life, and yet you insist you are not a Christian. If you believe these great truths sincerely, unquestioningly, you are. You cannot *really* in your heart believe them."

After a long pause Kate answered slowly and thoughtfully :

"Perhaps I do not. I have been deceiving myself. . . What shall, what can I do, to get this necessary faith, this belief?"

"Have you asked for it?"

"No. What would be the use? Prayers unless dedicated by faith, are not answered."

"The action is reciprocal, Kate. In the very act of praying for faith, it comes involuntarily. Your willingness to go to God also is an indication of your faith in his power to aid you."

"I never thought of it in that way."

"Besides, dearest, you are all the while watching your own feelings, almost morbidly investigating your mental state. You ask yourself constantly, 'Have I faith, can I hope in Christ, do I love him?' — whereas if you thought more of the wonderful purposes of his redemption, his self-forgetful love for you, and, most of all, his surpassing loveliness and beauty, unawares you would be exercising faith, unconsciously, in spite of yourself you would love him. For instance, when I first saw you, instead of wondering, hesitating, whether I loved you or could confide in you, I

noted your unselfish treatment of others, instinctively watched your every action, heard your words expressive of great capacity for the deeper, more sacred emotions, as well as for fun. I felt there was much in your nature thoroughly congenial with mine. It was not until afterwards that I analyzed my feelings, and then I became conscious how dear you were to me, how fully I could trust you. So it seems to me it is our relation to Christ. It is only by contemplating his character, studying into the motives which influenced his marvellous life, and withdrawing your attention from yourself, the unquestionable imperfection of your character, the comparative ignobleness of your motives, your lower aims and purposes. In short, study the Bible, in order to gain insight into the purposes of God. Do all you can to get strong impressions of Christ's characteristics, especially those which will attract your admiration, reverence and worship. Oh, Kate! He is wonderful. What would I do if I had not the comfort of loving and trusting him?"

The sweet voice faltered, and for a few minutes there was silence. Then Kate said gently:

"You never told me when you began to love him."

"Years and years ago — I can't remember how many — when I was very young. Then when I was about fifteen, I began to be troubled by doubts of not only the truths of Christianity but even of the existence of a God. With an ambitious desire for knowledge, I attacked subjects beyond my comprehension, and no wonder I was defeated. I read some books until the dreary abyss of skepticism, to which their theories pointed as my inevitable goal, startled and frightened me. I recoiled from the very verge, and heartsick, with puzzled, perplexed brain, I once more took up the Bible, which I had neglected because I no longer believed in its supernatural origin. Gradually the old faith came back. . . How thoroughly I sympathize with Arthur. He goes deeper than I because he is older and has more leisure time. But he promised me the night before he went away he would read my Bible every day. I am hopeful for his safety now, for there is nothing like God's own Word to solve our problems for us, and guide us on to certainty. But tell me Kate, all that is in your mind."

"My greatest difficulty, I think, is having no vivid consciousness of sin," said Kate, after a long pause.

"You must not expect to have the same experience which some have. There are degrees of penitence as well as of happiness. But you consider yourself a sinner?"

"Yes — but I have no overwhelming conviction of the magnitude of my guilt."

"I hardly think that is necessary. But all sin is relative, Katie. Your pride, your sometimes freely expressed displeasure at the too evident bigotry and uncharitableness of church members, are perhaps as displeasing to God, as those sins which the world judges as great, and deserving of legal punishment. Perhaps if we were tempted as those poor sinners are, with no restraints of home ties, and no culture and training, we would be no stronger, no purer. God is just and wise, and as he weighs every atom of evidence in favor of our innocence, he also makes us responsible for all the advantages we enjoy, opportunities for learning his will. . . How little excuse you really have, darling, for shutting your heart to Christ,

who has been knocking there so long, so patiently."

"I seem to have no power over my heart," almost groaned Kate; and there was a double meaning in her words which Nettie did not comprehend.

"Nettie! Do you want a lamp up there?" called Sarah, at the foot of the stairs.

Kate started up:

"I must go home. I didn't know it was getting so dark."

"Net, did you hear me?"

"Yes, Sarah. I am coming down in just a moment, for Kate is going."

"I have hindered more than helped in your sewing," exclaimed that person contritely, as she fastened her fur cloak, "and I am afraid the good talk you intended to have, has been of quite a different nature."

"It has been just what I wished it," and Nettie reached up to kiss the trembling mouth lovingly.

"I wish you would not work all the evening, you look so tired and there are such dark rings under your eyes. If Arthur were here he would scold you."

It was the first time for weeks that Arthur's name had passed Kate's lips, and it was with an effort that she spoke it now.

Nettie laughed:

"Oh I wish he were here. I think we both need him to keep us in good trim. How noble he is!" she added musingly. "His protecting watch-care of Dr. Lockwood that night, is one proof of it; yes, and of his self-denial too, for of all places which he hates, that odious public house is the worst. Every sense must have revolted against going there."

"I hope no slanders are being circulated about it," said Kate. "I should be sorry for Jack's sake, just as he is beginning to recover lost ground. . . Oh dear! I must go. Sarah will be scowling at me. . . Jack has seemed rather down-hearted lately in spite of his good fortune. Perhaps all his craving for stimulus has returned with added force since that night, and he has had to struggle harder than ever. Have you seen him lately?"

"Yes, he was here calling last evening," answered Nettie, her face flushing unaccountably.

"He has been working very hard since he took

Dr. Dent's practice. I only see him Sunday night's at tea. . . How hard it is to leave you, Net, but what will Sarah say? I believe I feel something the way lovers feel when they are parting from their lady-loves. The minutes fly by unheeded, but the end doth have to come. Good-bye Pussie," and Kate looked lovingly down into the other's face. I hope you will be very happy."

But Nettie put a different construction on the words from that which Kate had intended, and instead of associating Arthur with the wish, her mind reverted to Dr. Lockwood, who, very strangely, had been entirely forgotten by her who had last spoken of him.

Oh! how many times in life a word or look rightly understood, would dispel all our illusions, and reveal to our blind eyes, truths marvellous and strange! But the revelation is missed in our blindness, and we grope on uncheered by the hope and joy which by right belongs to us—the deprivation and loss being none the less disappointing and hard to be patiently borne.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CRISIS.

"Now I would stay: God bids me go.
Now I would rest: God bids me work."

— *Christina Rossetti.*

TOWARDS the end of the winter Mr. Burton's business prospects grew dark and threatening, with no apparent escape from ultimate failure, because pride and a manly fear of the humiliation of debt restrained him from accepting the necessary assistance of his friends.

Nettie had not given up school, for the payment

of her services there was now becoming a necessity for her support. In addition to these, she assumed the whole responsibility of the house-keeping and home arrangements, thus leaving Sarah free to assist her mother in the sewing. She no longer had time to go, as of old, to the old church, for even an hour's practice on the organ — practice which had always been a sweet relief from the unpoetical, monotonous duties of every day life. And of a nature like Nettie's, poetry and music were two of the elements of its happiness. . . From early morning there was an unceasing round of practical work, and when evening came she was often too weary to study, or even think of anything higher than the fatiguing, commonplace cares weighing upon her. In discouraging moments of self-examination, she feared she was growing narrow, apathetic, devoid of those finer sensibilities for the beautiful which too often grow dull for want of exercise. Life seemed to be so hard and material, a struggle merely for common things — time to sleep and food enough to eat, seemed the only objects of her activity.

She would have been more than human, if her

lips had uttered no complaints, or her heart cherished no regrets for past advantages. She realized with an intensity borrowed from her active imagination, what personal comfort she had sacrificed in refusing to escape from these depressing annoyances, to the freer life offered to her by Arthur.

She did not actually repent of her decision, but she could not help feeling disappointed and mortified, and a little indignant that her sacrifice had been accepted with so much indifference, and regarded so much as a matter-of-course.

Nevertheless, this did not alter her opinion of its necessity. And so the consciousness that her presence was needed, that her duty lay just here, in this narrow sphere, that she to a degree relieved the pressure of the burden weighing upon others, brought compensation and requital for benefits denied.

Her health, never very vigorous, perceptibly suffered from the demands made upon it. She grew thin and pale, weary lines of care imprinting themselves on the sweet young face which ought to have been bright and unshadowed, and would have been so, had outward circumstances been less,

discouraging. Kate watched the changes with anxious foreboding, and to a great degree forgot her own troubles, in sympathy for her friend.

"Come home with me and stay all night," she would often say, as she dropped in on her way home from school. But Nettie with a glance at unfinished work would slowly shake her head in decided refusal.

But Nettie was not the only sufferer. All the family shared in the anxiety and care, though all did not share in it with the fortitude she manifested. It was very hard to listen to Mrs. Burton's selfish complaints, harder still to witness her father's changed appearance.

The consciousness that he was doing so little for his family, thus entailing on them embarrassment and perplexity, and his unavailing efforts to redress these evils, made him despondent and unsocial.

At last, towards the end of April, the crisis came. He closed his store because he no longer had funds to replenish the low stock, and he would not ask for credit, and very early in the afternoon he went home. As it was his custom in whatever troubled him, to consult Nettie first, he went

directly to the sitting-room, where he fortunately found her alone.

"I am very sorry, father," she said calmly, after he had finished his short communication, but it is just as well it comes now. The suspense has been worse than the certainty. But have you saved nothing?"

"No," he almost groaned, sinking on the chair, and covering his face with his hands. "If you had only settled with that professor at Woodbridge! If it had not been for my pride and selfishness, you would have been spared all these hardships which you have borne so patiently." In spite of himself the strong man burst into tears. But he quickly controlled himself.

"Hush, darling," said Nettie, kissing him, "you will make your head ache so. You must not think of me. I am glad I did not go. Perhaps if our home is broken up now, I can yet."

"Not unless you get stronger. Though I have said nothing, I have not disguised from myself that you have been working too hard, but it was not until the other day that I realized how really ill you look. The fear of your health failing, is harder to bear than all these possibilities of pov-

erty. I wish you to consent to go to Kate's for a few day's rest. She was in this morning urging me to insist on your going, and saying it might save you a long sickness."

"I could not leave just now."

"I shall be here to attend to everything. You must go, with no opposition."

When her father spoke in that tone, Nettie knew it was useless to raise objections to his will.

"But have you made any plans in regard to the future?" she asked, after a short time of thought.

"Nothing definite. If my negotiations with a merchant of Woodbridge, turn out well, the coast is clear, and we can once more begin life. I am glad I have made no debts. They are heavy clogs on a man's steps. But I haven't accomplished much in these three years since —"

"Hush, papa, you musn't speak that way," and she laid her hand on his lips.

"Well," he said, as soon as she allowed him once more to speak, "jump down now. I hear your mother coming. Get ready to go to Kate's."

She is expecting you. I will make all the fires; even get breakfast, and there will not be much for Sarah to do," and with a smile motioning her away, he rose to meet his wife.

CHAPTER XX.

KATE'S HOME.

"But long we had not talked, ere we built up a pile of better thoughts."—*Wordsworth's Excursion.*

OH, it is lovely to be here!" exclaimed Nettie, perhaps for the sixteenth time, as she curled up in the big chair before the fire and looked over at her friend sitting by the centre-table.

"You poor little tired bird! No wonder you are glad to come at last to the shelter of my nest," answered Kate, laying down her book and coming to Nettie's side.

"I ought not to have spoken to you, but I got so tired watching leaf after leaf being turned so unceasingly. You must not study too much, old girl."

"No danger, Pussie. I am not yet far enough ahead of Edith Mason to content myself with resting on the oars. The race is getting exciting. I hope no adverse currents will set in."

Kate thoughtfully began pushing back the clinging hair around Nettie's broad high forehead, but almost at the same moment she started back quickly:

"Why, your head is so burning hot, Net! Yes, and your cheeks have two red spots on them, while the rest of your face is quite pale. . . How do you feel? Give me your symptoms!"

Nettie laughed:

"Well, Dr. Wallace, my head aches as though it would split, to make use of a somewhat hackneyed but very expressive phrase; I feel generally weak and shaky, cold and hot by turns; in fact I ache all over."

"We talked too late last night, instead of your sleeping. Your father will repent your coming, unless you get stronger. You have been here

three days, and every hour you feel worse. What shall I do to you for being so, so, well — what ever you like to call it?"

"I don't know. I only beg you to deal gently with my peculiar constitution — too much scolding will frustrate your most benevolent intentions. Suppose I go to bed and then you can read Wordsworth to me, instead of reading myself. What do you say? Meanwhile hand me that Bible on the table."

"I say go to bed by all means, whether we have Wordsworth or not. I am going to get you some hot water. I have been studying some of Jack's medicine books which he lent to pa lately, and I fear you are in for a seige of fever."

"Kate! You really think so? Oh! I must go home."

Nettie started up suddenly, but Kate stopped her with the firm, decided words:

"This is the best, the only place for you, right by my side."

"But I can't, I *won't* be sick," she exclaimed passionately.

"You can, if it is to come," returned Kate,

calmly, laying her hands on Nettie's shoulders, and gently compelling her to resume the large comfortable chair. For a moment the two looked earnestly into each other's eyes—the one seemed to gain strength as well as submission from the other's calmer, firmer determination. The hot flush faded from her cheek; then she covered her face with her hands.

“The sole reason of my hasty, perhaps thoughtless expression of opinion,” explained Kate, after a short time of silence, is that I wish you to give up your own will. In spite of the weariness and exhaustion from which you suffer, you will allow yourself no rest, now that you are where you can rest. It will be better for you and for all of us, if you just yield to my superier wisdom and obey my orders. You must not only go to bed now, but you must stay there for a few days, and we will see if we cannot ward off this threatening ogre. It may prove to be but a phantom after all, one of those bogies we used to read about. Quiet and repose is just what you want, and what you must and can have, if you will only be sensible, and give up the idea that you are a descend-

ant of Atlas and must relieve him from the burden of the world. Here, let me take down your hair."

"Oh! it is so sweet to be near you, and have you think and act for me," murmured Nettie, submissively. "I have depended on myself so long."

"You see you realize now what you have missed in so resolutely refusing to come here before. Why, during these last two or three months you have really neglected me, Net. I feel as though some of the old landmarks had gone, like the peaks of a submerged continent. (I really don't know whether that is original or not.) We shall have to begin to get acquainted over again."

The breezy, cheerful way Kate spoke was rapidly driving away the clouds from Nettie's face. She answered quite brightly:

"Well, we'll build a landmark here to-night, to symbolize increased confidence and love in each other. Shall we?"

"Yes, Pussie; and here is my private seal affixed to the top," and Kate kissed the high, intellectual forehead.

"I don't think you care for Wordsworth to-

night, You look very tired. Let me throw this shawl over you, and then I will read a little from the Bible—reading will tire your eyes—shall I, Net?”

“Oh please do. How good you are.”

“Not much self-denial in that, child. Since your advice to me, I have read every evening.”

“You have been more faithful than I. Sometimes I have been so tired and worried and sleepy that my mind could not fasten itself even on the Bible.”

“I do not think you can complain of unfaithfulness. Were I half so good as you, I would rest contented, and strive no more for—”

“Hush, Kate! Do you imagine we are accepted of God because we are faithful in the observance of ceremonies, or because we manage by his help to live moderately commendable lives?”

“I think it has a good deal to do with it. After I have found out God's will, and regulated my life by it, of course I shall be accepted. He would be unjust to turn me away. As it is now, my will is contrary to his. I know it is.”

“You do not understand the nature of Christ's

work for us. When you have read more, your opinions will change."

Kate's voice was one of her greatest attractions. In ordinary conversation she spoke so rapidly, and with such marked emphasis, that its real, inherent sweetness was unnoticed; but when she read aloud anything which appealed to her sense of the sublime or the beautiful, the varied tenderness, pathos and depth of feeling in the intonation of her voice, often brought tears to the eyes of her listeners. She was sitting at her friend's feet, the long heavy coils of her hair loosened on her shoulders, one arm thrown across Nettie's knee, the other supporting the book. The firelight danced over her, bringing out in fine relief the prominent eyebrows and nose, the full, decided mouth, the unstudied grace of the whole figure. As Nettie looked down at her—admiration and love blending with the wistful desire in her eyes, her swift involuntary thought was:

"If she only belonged to Christ, what a grand and splendid character she would have."

Kate chose the ninetyeth psalm, then went on to the ninety-first, and the appreciative accuracy of inflection, the unconscious eloquence of tone,

made the glorious meaning more clear and luminous to Nettie than ever before.

The room in which Kate and Nettie were sitting was small, but very cosy and pleasant. It had always been Mr. Wallace's wish to allow adequate means to his daughter for the culture of her fine taste for art, for beauty and harmony of color. The sofa and chairs and the drapery of the windows were of crimson, and in fine contrast the groundwork of the carpet was of soft wood color and white, covered with trailing wood mosses, ferns, with here and there a cluster of crimson wintergreen berries. Opposite to where they sat were two copies of Michael Angelo's "Night and Day," while on the wall behind them hung five or six small water-colors of exquisite beauty and workmanship. On the left stood a bookcase, its contents revealing pretty accurately the intellectual taste of the owner. The books were few in number, and not by any means elegantly bound, but they indicated a discriminating judgment and maturity of choice not often developed in a young lady of nineteen. Over the case was a small Parian bust of Shakespeare, the prince of dramatic literature. A close scrutiny would have

shown a large portion of the left ear knocked off, a loss which no subsequent repentance had been able to restore. Over the mantle hung portraits of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, which Kate had extracted from books containing their poems, and had neatly framed. On the cords of the pictures were drooped sprays of pressed ivy, wild vines and autumn leaves, which she had gathered at different times in the woods near the town. The large table in the centre of the room was covered by a disorderly array of school books and papers, an open inkstand, and a broken, discouraged looking penholder in unsafe proximity to a once fine copy of Virgil, the freshly turned page, now, alas ! suffering the ignominy of a not very small blot left there by the impulsive student when she had started up in answer to Nettie's voice. The inkstand, itself, looked as if half-resolved to slip off the edge of the table, and precipitate its dark contents on the soft, beautiful carpet, but its very charitable intentions prevented the sorrow which such an act would have inevitably caused.

In spite of these indications of a very human tendency towards carelessness and disorder, the

room altogether gave one the impression of a refined, womanly presence, a nature not too careful of beautiful things to make them objects of less than daily enjoyment. To Nettie's eyes, so long accustomed to the bare, unadorned, fireless apartment at home, this seemed a very elysium of comfort and beauty.

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The next day it was apparent that Kate's prophecy had come true. Nettie was suffering from a high fever and great prostration. Towards evening Dr. Dent was called, and gave the opinion that her symptoms indicated the beginning of a desperate case of typhoid. To her anxious entreaties to be taken home, both he and Mrs. Wallace gave a decided refusal, informing her gravely that any restless dissatisfaction with her present position would be perfectly useless; nay, more! that any impatient struggles against the disease would but make its hold upon her system more tenacious and lasting.

"If you must be sick, I am so glad you are here," said Kate warmly, after the doctor had gone, and the two were alone together. "It will

save me so much time. I would be so anxious that I would have to run to your house continually, whereas now I shall have you right in view. No objections, child. Why can't you become reconciled to what *must* be? Is it not rebelling against God's purposes, for you to be so agitated?"

This said in the gentlest, most loving way, appealed to Nettie's judgment, and though she felt no less reluctant, her unrest and impatience, by a desperate act of will, were in a measure subdued.

Mrs Wallace refused to have Sarah take charge of the sick girl, gently insisting that the services of the experienced nurse who had often attended the family in their times of illness, would be more efficacious. Kate's dear little room was given up for Nettie's exclusive possession, and she established herself in one across the hall, where she could be near her friend, and have her under her supervision, and yet be beyond the reach of any harmful results from too close communication.

CHAPTER XXI.

AT LAST.

"Thought which may be faced though comfortless,"

— *Wordsworth.*

KATE'S nature had been too strong and healthful to yield to the weakness of unvarying despondency; her spirits too elastic to long sustain the depressing condition of mind imposed by the discovery of a feeling for Arthur McDonald, which she fancied was not reciprocated; and yet the shadows were still thronging around her heart. If the sunshine was dominant in the expression of her bright face, it was not

because her memory was inactive; if mirth and joyousness were still the most conspicuous traits of her manner, it was not that she was inconstant, or had forgotten the comfort and joy of the dear old childhood days.

But the sunshine in her face became shadowed by grave, anxious forebodings, as the days crept on and the invalid grew weaker and weaker. The sunshine finally vanished, except for now and then a gleam of its old beauty, when Nettie's weary brain at last lost its balance, and delirium with all its painful, dangerous symptoms ensued.

Her own griefs, how insignificant and trifling they seemed in comparison with this dreadful possibility of death! . . All the love for Nettie which had grown deeper and stronger as the opportunities for insight into her mind and heart had multiplied, now seemed to merge into one passionate desire for her life.

Nettie had been ill twenty days, and she still lay in a critical state, midway between life and death, with apparently but one chance to make the balance dip either way. It was about nine o'clock Saturday evening, and Kate was sitting alone in the large room across the hall. Longing

for a quiet time alone, she had plead the excuse of a headache, and forsaken the family group gathered below. Having given the already bright fire a vigorous, half-impatient poke, an act perhaps not necessary because of the warm spring atmosphere; after unloosening the heavy coils of her hair on her shoulders, and throwing a loose dress around her, she had established herself by the table, and taken up the book lying open upon it. What time to-day could be devoted to study had been spent just here by this table. A large sheet of foolscap ornamented with sundry ominous blots and holes, made by her pen in a fit of desperate impatience, testified that here had occurred an intellectual struggle.

Prof. Green had submitted to the graduating class an intricate problem in trigonometry, offering a special prize to the pupil who would solve it to his satisfaction in the space of three days, provided, of course, the usual studies were not neglected. If there was one branch of study in which this eager, energetic Kate delighted, it was mathematics. Consequently she had attacked this problem with enthusiastic zeal. But until this afternoon it had baffled her most persistent

efforts. She had found in it diversion from her anxiety and unrest, and quite naturally felt sorry when the fascination of uncertainty was removed. Though feeling the unpleasant reaction and weariness which always comes after long sustained tension of the intellect, she determined to prepare her "Latin work" for Monday. But her endeavors proved futile, impassioned and elevated odes of Horace awakened no ideas of sympathy and recognition in her brain. At the beginning of the stanza "*Dis carus ipseus*," the book was impatiently thrown aside, and extinguishing the lamp she rolled a lounge nearer the fire and curled up in a formless, indefinite heap upon it. The firelight was quite strong enough to render every object distinctly visible, yet each cast weird, dusky shadows, and the remote corners of the room were thick with darkness—symbolic of the blacker darkness which she thought was coming into her life. . .

The strong desire for a definite and decided opinion in regard to the religion of Christ, had not slumbered during these long anxious weeks—it had only been slightly weakened by the stronger, more urgent desire for her friend's res-

toration. But to-night she realized that if the question of her own acceptance of God were not decided soon, it might forever remain the open question it had hitherto proved to be. Through sorrow her heart had been humbled and she had been brought nearer to God. Her conscience seemed thoroughly awake, and all her pride had, at least for a time, vanished before the keen, unerring perception of her own sinfulness and guilt.

Kate did not till afterwards know how long she remained there thinking these perplexing, disturbing thoughts. They changed at last to prayer, prayer because of her own great need and absorbing wish for help:

“Oh God! I am so miserable, so unhappy. I need thee and the comfort of thy presence so much. My life is a failure. My ambitions make me restless. My selfish aims do not satisfy me, even when attained. I confess my sin in living apart from thee. I need thy pardon. I need thee to fill my heart. Life without thee—I see, I feel it—is empty and worthless. Oh teach me to be reconciled to thy will; to regard this earthly joy for which I long, as of no worth, compared to

the peace which thou canst give to me. I *am* willing to bear crosses if thou wilt bring me nearer to thee. . .

“Oh subdue my heart. Make me less wilful, less proud. Let me love thee so well, that I need not grieve over the sorrow which has been sent into my life, nor dread that greater sorrow which seems to be so surely approaching. May it not embitter my heart, or make me forgetful of the joys of others. Oh! grant my wish; at least, give me resignation. Comfort, sustain me. Oh God! I need it so much.”

As Kate thought and prayed, the Redeemer seemed so near her. It was almost like talking to him, there in that shadowy, lonely room. All the barriers which her reserve, unbelief and pride had raised between herself and him were overthrown. There was just this aching, sorrowful heart confiding in his divine sympathy.

In relation to her own condition her thought was not “I am not sinless enough to ask these blessings, nor do I feel enough sorrow for my sin,” but “Oh Jesus, how beautiful and glorious thou art! Take me just as I am. In spite of all my efforts I cannot change myself. Do with me,

make what thou wilt. Conquer my will. I know, I believe, thou wilt forgive me. I have been wrong, willfully self-reliant—considered the granting of my own desires the best happiness I could have. Teach me how to depend solely on thee—to make my chief happiness henceforth the loving and serving thee.”

And gradually, like the almost imperceptible change from night to darkness into the twilight of the early dawn, thence into the brightness of sunrise—we see not the modes of the transition, but know the one condition is different from the other—so Kate emerged from the gloom caused by resistance to divine will, estrangement from divine love, into the glorious sunlight of the Infinite Father’s favor and grace.

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With a weary sigh, Nettie turned over and closed her eyes. Kate with difficulty disengaged her hand from her close clasp of it, and mechanically sat down on the side of the bed. . . Jack never forgot the expression of her face.

"It is strange that you happen here to-night," she said at last, not turning around. She felt she *must* say something, to break the embarrassing silence. "What do you think of her condition. Is it unfavorable?"

"I cannot tell yet," he answered, coming to her side, and looking at Nettie's face. "She is in a heavy stupor, caused by the fatigue of talking so long. The coherence of her words, and the evident logical connection of ideas in her mind indicate a return of reason. But it may return only for —" His voice failed him and he went back to his station by the fire.

No more was said by either of them for the space of three long hours. Kate leaned against the bedpost, one arm thrown across the counterpane, while the other hand covered her eyes. Conflicting and perplexed thoughts chased each other through her brain. Her anxiety was not only shared, but exceeded by her companion, who

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At his touch she roused again, but her eyes did not open.

"She will live if no relapse sets in," he whispered softly, as he dashed away the tears which dimmed his sight.

"Thank God!" and Kate, with one uncontrollable sob, buried her face in the bedclothes. But the next moment she was calm and self-possessed as the occasion demanded.

Towards noon the sleeper once more awoke. Her thought was evidently active for she asked as soon as she caught the glance of Kate's loving eyes:

"How long have I been here, Kate?"

"Over three weeks."

"How long it must be. I cannot remember."

"Don't try to, darling. Your mind must not be troubled."

"How beautiful the room is! That picture over there. Why see! the man is coming right out of the frame. He smiles and nods so pleasantly. See! he has taken up a spray of ivy to encircle his brow. Ah! it is Shelley, a poet crowned among men. . . Kate, why is Mr. Lockwood here?"

Apparently for the first time she formed a definite idea of his presence, and a faint flush came over her pale, thin face.

"Dr. Dent is ill and unable to be out. Hence I have been obliged to attend you for two or three days," Jack answered, pouring some medicine into a glass which, for the sake of having something to occupy his hands, he immediately poured back.

"You are both so kind," Nettie murmured faintly, turning away her face.

Perhaps she slept during the next half hour. She was at any rate silent, and nothing broke the stillness in the room but the low, monotonous tick of the clock upon the mantle-piece. To Jack it seemed as though Kate must distinctly hear his heart-beats, but probably she did not, inasmuch as she sent no curious glances in his direction.

"I will be back about ten," he whispered, as he put on his boots and rose to get his hat. "Meantime continue the medicine as directed, and keep her as quiet as possible. You are a capital nurse, Katharine, have all the elements of self-control so necessary in women of that profession. I think it would be well for you not

to leave her very long to-day; it is Sunday, you know. She is not well acquainted with Mrs. Walton, and any agitation should be avoided."

"But Jack, her mind is not clear yet. Her fancy about the picture?"

"Such things are not unusual. The mists of past illusions, still clung around her mind, the imagination is still more active than the reason. Besides she is so weak that any slight unusualness in arrangements, or words, may be misunderstood. Treat these vagaries as a matter of course. Before long they will entirely disappear.

With one more searching, critical look at the invalid, he went quickly from the room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CONSPIRACY.

"No joy is like the sweet delight which comes beyond, above, against our hopes."—*Sophocles*.

AH! those halcyon days of convalescence, in which the slowness of recovery but enhanced the charm of gaining each day new strength and vigor! How sweet Kate's tender care, and Dr. Lockwood's unceasing, chivalrous thoughtfulness. Then what fun the three had over her awkward attempts to walk across the room, in how many speculations they indulged relative to the amount of food she consumed,

calculating with despairing faces the loss her ravenous appetite would entail upon the community.

It is not known whether Jack strongly urged Dr. Dent to partake freely of his own potent medicines. At any rate, the young man very wickedly was not sorry that the old doctor continued to be unable to attend his Belmont patients.

Amidst all the rush and hurry of his professional duties, Dr. Lockwood either cut other calls short, or when this was not practicable, stole time which should have been spent in sleep in order to have a chance to always make two calls a day at the Wallaces' — a sacrifice which he persuaded his professional conscience was absolutely necessary.

In watching the thin cheek gradually rounding, the sweet face by degrees growing less pallid, and more healthful in hue, there was a charm equalled by no experience in all his past life.

Because of the knowledge unconsciously revealed to him by Nettie's delirious confession, the proud reserve which had hitherto characterized his intercourse with her, changed to the frank, buoyant joyousness most natural to his manner.

As for Nettie, the attraction of these pleasant talks about books and nature and life — its grand-

eur and possibilities for noble achievements was unparalleled. If by chance the doctor's visits were delayed beyond the usual time, with the impatience of an invalid, she restlessly watched the clock until his appearance, and then she would settle down in contented enjoyment of his cheery greeting, and strong, manly communication of opinion.

Their thoughts often ran in different channels, but the direction of the current was the same. Their tastes, though in minor details diverse, were not inharmonious. . . Both had experienced the reality and sternness of personal conflict with evil, but they could sympathize in the mutual experience of some of the deepest, purest joys which the human soul can cherish.


They together looked forward to an heavenly inheritance of sinlessness and joy after life's struggles and incomplete happiness should be forever gone. . .

"From all a closer interest flourished up,
Tenderness, touch by touch and last to these,
Love like an Alpine harebell hung with tears
By some cold morning glacier; frail at first
And feeble, all unconscious of itself,
But such as gathered color day by day."

The emotions with which Kate regarded these manifestations of personal preference could not be described.

With keen delight she noticed the smiles so often on Nettie's lips, the subdued, softened joy shining out of her eyes. It did her heart good to see the old merriment, the boyish exuberance of spirits which characterized Jack's every word and action. With a woman's love for romance she participated sympathetically in it all.

For herself the burden which had been laid upon her seemed considerably lightened by Nettie's unconscious revelation; nevertheless its weight was still heavy. She would not allow herself to hope. There had been no definite knowledge communicated — only a delirious girl's vagaries, which might or might not have foundation in fact. The future looked still uncertain, its issues problematical. Though she felt something like satisfaction and relief that her conjectures in regard to Arthur and Nettie had proved false, it was yet clear that the barrier *he* fancied existed between him and her would not be removed in any appreciable degree by the sick girl's avowal. There was no probability there would be



any diminution of reserve should he come back to Belmont. Would not her motives be again misjudged, the very suspicion of his feelings for her, joined to the consciousness of what had been the cause of the suspicion, make her demeanor more than ever unsatisfactory to him, her mode of speech and action a more impenetrable disguise of her secret thoughts? With all Kate's frankness and courage and impulse, she was not one of those

"Who setting wide the doors that bar
The secret, hidden chambers of the heart
Let in the day."

But unknown to herself, an idea was working in the mind of her friend, Dr. Jack. His insight was naturally clear and penetrating. He had often speculated on the cause which made her look unhappy in moments when she fancied no one observed her; hence from a real desire to help her, as well as to gratify his thoroughly manly curiosity, he had, on the evening of Mrs. McDonald's party, ventured to unravel the mystery.

Her answer had not completely satisfied him. He doubted whether this apparent unhappiness

was entirely due to the fact that Christian peace and joy were denied to her aspiring heart.

Amid his own astonishment and sudden hope during the long, anxious vigil of that eventful night, he had not failed to note her white, startled face when she unclasped her hand from Nettie's, nor the protest in her eyes as she turned towards him and said in an agitated voice :

"It is strange that you happen here to-night, Jack."

To Nettie he never alluded to that which more than anything else, had caused his relations towards her to change so rapidly, until one day when they were sitting together by the south window in Mrs. Wallace's cosy little parlor. It was Nettie's first day down-stairs.

About dinner-time he and Kate had almost carried her down, and established her at the table. In spite of professional press of work the former had been induced to remain, and superintend his patient. Among more poetical subjects, the talk had been about fever—the strange phases of delirium it often produced, and the scientific causes of the same. After dinner Kate immediately rushed off to school, and Nettie slowly

directed her steps to the parlor. By tacit understanding, Dr. Lockwood, of course, accompanied her.

The soft spring sunshine lay in wide bands on the carpet, and cast a glorious light over the pictures, vases and statuettes which adorned the walls and tables. A pleased look of recognition crossed Nettie's face as she sank into an easy chair by the window. To her eyes, so long accustomed to the narrow limits of one room, how new and fresh and delightful every familiar object seemed. "It is like beginning life again," she said, looking up at Jack, while one stray beam of sunlight fell across her head.

"It is a beginning of life for both of us," he answered, as he rolled a chair near her and seated himself. "I wish no traces of the suffering, painful past remained. Ah! the memory of its sins is so vivid! Yet if I forgot, perhaps I should be less humble, less dependent on the strength of our divine helper."

"Now Jack, we must have no blue fits of despondency to-day. You're not nearly so happy as yesterday."

"I am afraid my moods of alternate exaltation

and depression will not always satisfy you," he said laughingly.

"I don't fear. I have such an even temperament that I shall prove a good balance-wheel or counter-irritation (to make use of a medical phrase). . . You are so much like Kate. She will begin the day in perfectly hilarious spirits, in about an hour the slightest thing will make her despond, then she will be all right again, only to end the day in gloom. It seems as if—"

"That reminds me," he interrupted, "that I wish to speak to you about her. . . When we were talking about the queer, odd things you said in your delirium, we omitted the most important of all."

"Jack! what? Tell me," Nettie exclaimed as he paused.

"Be patient, and I will," he answered thoughtfully. Then in a low tone he repeated all she had said about Arthur and Kate, carefully omitting however any allusion to himself. "That was the first hint either of us had that our conjectures had been mistaken," he said.

"What conjectures?" asked Nettie, in bewilderment.

"That you and Arthur were engaged, or would some time be."

"Is it possible that people ever thought of such a thing," she exclaimed excitedly.

"They not only thought of it, but universally spoke of its certainty. This is a gossiping community."

"How absurd! Why it never entered our heads. We were too intent on metaphysical discussions to ever think of anything more ideal or romantic. Of course I thought he was a glorious fellow, and he probably reciprocated the sentiment. That was all. How unfortunate that there cannot exist steadfast and true friendships between gentlemen and ladies without such unpleasant reports spreading! . . . How strange I should talk so to Kate, just as if she were Arthur himself! I wonder how she felt. . . It was well that state secrets were not intrusted to me."

"Then Arthur really loves her?"

"Yes, and he is in trouble about it, too. How recreant to his trust and confidence I have been."

"There is no cause for self-reproach. He may have reason to thank you for —"

"Why?"

"I am strongly impressed by the idea that Kate also suspected his preference for you. Even that would have been sufficient cause for coldness — provided of course — well I think Kate likes him pretty well."

"Jack, really? Oh! it would be too good, too comforting a thing to be true... That is so," Nettie continued thoughtfully, as her memory dwelt on the past. The capricious moods, the sarcasm, the raillery of which he complained, admit of satisfactory explanation. It would be just her way of hiding her feelings. Then her silence and reserve in speaking to me of him. That strange sentence in her letter, too, which I could not understand. Why, how plain it is, how blind we both were! Ah! Doctor Jack, your intuition is more delicate than mine after all... What! Must you go?"

"Yes," answered Lockwood. "I have a host of patients clamoring for opium, mercury, etc. You must go right to bed, Nettie, I have tired you too long. Let me carry you up-stairs."

And before she could object or frustrate his design, he had seized her in his strong arms — up

the stairs — and laid her, breathless with surprise and laughter, in Kate's arm-chair.

"Now, good-bye," he said lovingly. "When you feel like it, write to Arthur, and tell him we are so happy, we want him to share with us. It would be a nice surprise to Kate, to have him appear suddenly."

"But not until she has graduated. Her mind seems wholly on her books, now. It would be disastrous to have it diverted. It would be doing her a wrong."

"But she has only one more week of examinations, and he wouldn't come before that, any way."

"All right. I will send him word to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIV.

TWILIGHT CONFIDENCES.

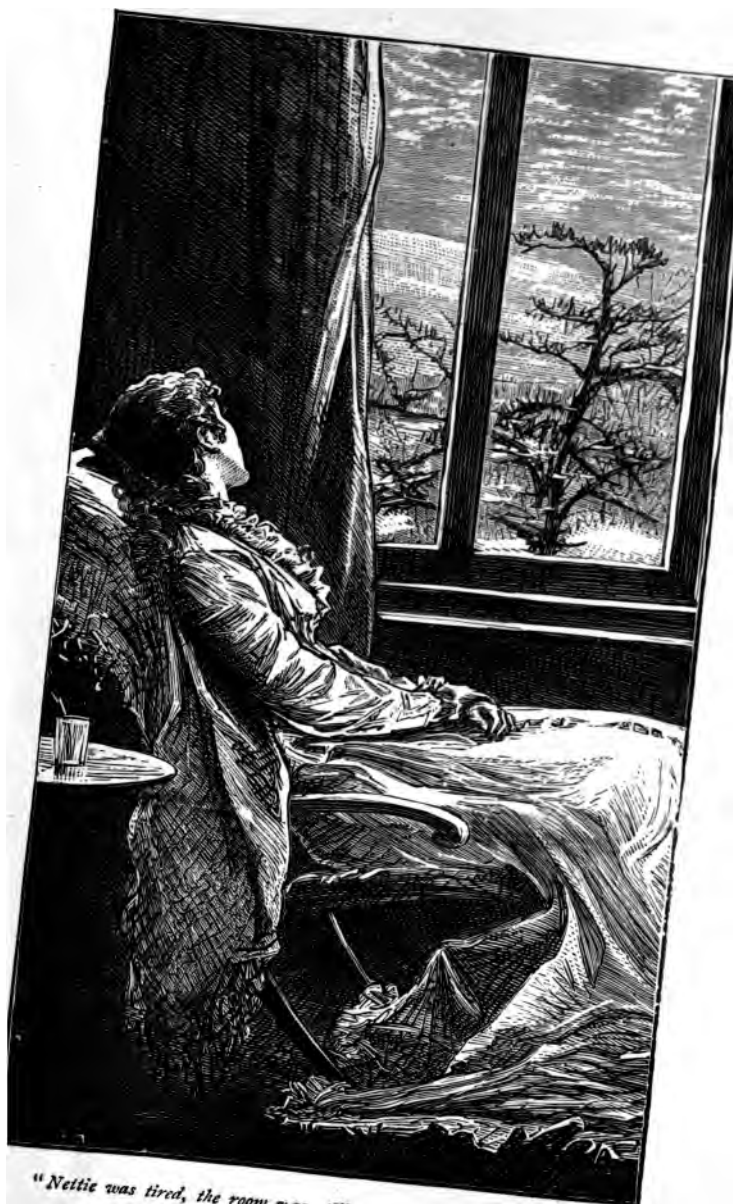
"A friend is he who makes us do what we can."

—*Story of Avis.*

NETTIE was tired, the room was very still, the chair easy and favorable for the gratification of indolent propensities. Soon she slept.

However about half-past three Kate arrived, and even her light step in the room disturbed the sleeper. She awoke with a nervous start.

"I wouldn't have come in," Kate said, with genuine contrition, "but I was not aware you had come up-stairs."



*"Nettie was tired, the room was still, the chair easy and favourable.
She soon slept."—Page 302.*

1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

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7. The seventh part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.

"I sleep so much, I can afford to have my nap curtailed. Come here and kiss me. How hot your cheeks are! How went the examinations? Sit down."

"Oh, as usual. I fear I did not do well in logic. The paper was long, and I was not well up in all the questions. Edith Mason did splendidly, I heard. Belle Forrester took my mind away from Jevon. She annoyed me this morning; so we had a tiff immediately after school."

"What did she do?" asked Nettie, feeling the interest in little details characteristic of those who are denied communication with the outward, busy world.

"She was teasing little Nellie Montgomery, and as usual I joined in the fracas, and gave her a good-sized piece of my mind. Positively my head aches. Isn't there a hole near this left ear?" asked Kate, with a grave air of enquiry

"I don't perceive any unusual deficiency," answered Nettie, laughing. "But what did she say in return?"

"It isn't worth repeating; and I am very sure nothing with which I favored her would particularly edify you or charm away your weariness. . . I

am disgusted that I lowered myself by speaking to her at all."

Kate's lips curled with something closely resembling scorn.

"Have you ever thought that you could be of real service to her? Perhaps the work which you so long to do for Christ is thus lying right before you."

Kate started and looked at Nettie enquiringly.

"Pardon me for assuming to say anything which even resembles fault-finding; but it seems to me that you do not hope to ever find Belle different from the haughty, disagreeable girl you think her to be."

"Think her to be! Why, Nettie I *know* so."

"Well, even if your knowledge be accurate, is she not capable of being changed, reformed?"

"I 'spose she is. All reprobates are said to have a soft spot somewhere in their hearts."

"Why cannot we try and reach that?"

"Why Nettie Burton, her hard angles are so prominent, and so scratchy, so repelling, that half my years would be wasted in the search for the aforesaid spot. Moreover, it is so far away from sight."

“Do you not think it is wrong to —”

“Oh I am all wrong to-day. My mind is all tangled up,” interrupted Kate impatiently, and hotly. “That girl rouses the very spirit of evil in my heart. I detest and abhor her. She is frivolous, deceptive and unsafe. Oh if I could only choke her, expel her from Belmont — only do *something* so I need never have her to trouble and make us all unhappy.”

Nettie did not look shocked, though this angry, passionate tone had never before been heard. Was this a specimen of Kate’s “temper” which she herself had so often deplored, regretted, wept over? In the indignant flashing eyes and flushed cheeks before her she saw little resemblance to the face of her friend.

“Kate! what is the matter?” at that moment asked a surprised voice behind them, and Kate turned quickly and faced her mother.

The two looked steadily at each other, Mrs. Wallace’s expression one of sad, reproachful severity. Soon the fire faded from the daughter’s eyes, the cheeks lost their hot, unnatural flush, and the firm mouth trembled; then a revulsion of feelings swept through her mind and she laughed

nervously. Mrs. Wallace smiled in return and immediately sat down by Nettie's side. Kate gathered up the books which she had carelessly thrown on a chair, and with a half-defiant, half-comical glance at Nettie, left the room.

It was after dark when she reappeared carrying her friend's supper on a little tray, which had lately been in almost constant use.

"You will have to give me that for a souvenir of these twilight times together," said Nettie brightly, as it was deposited on the table beside her.

There were indistinct traces of tears on Kate's face, a sad, weary droop of the decided lines of her mouth.

"You shall have it, and also that picture of Shelley about which you had such an odd fancy," she answered quietly, as she arranged the dishes on the table. "Don't you wish a lamp?"

"No, thank you. Just poke the fire a wee bit. This subdued, rosy light is so delightful. How queer it seems to have a grate fire in warm weather. I need it though, because I'm so indolent. . . O Katie, I can never thank you enough for all your care of me," the "indolent" girl

added, after Kate had removed the table and established herself on a low seat at her feet.

"Don't try to thank me — only love me. I need that the most."

"You surely do not doubt me, darling?"

A troubled accent stole into Nettie's voice, and leaning forward she put her hand on Kate's bowed head, pushing back the masses of wavy hair from the broad, low brow.

"No, I do not doubt you; but I cannot see how there can be anything in me to attract your love. I am all angles and rough corners, abrupt, brusque, and in every way ungente. . . Oh how I have grieved the Master to-day; have been a disgrace instead of an honor to his cause. . . Nettie, when I realize what my tendencies are, how easily I am overwhelmed by these storms of anger, how they take me unawares when I am the least prepared, it seems as though I could not join the church, could not let people know I am trying to follow him. My influence would be so pernicious, and yet very contrary to my desire."

"God does not expect perfection in his servants, Kate — only earnestness, and faith and dependence upon him — joining the church is rather

a symbol of your desire to get all the help possible from these external aids, than a profession of strength or spiritual superiority. If we do the best we can, God will take care of our influence."

"But I do not do the best I can, always. I do not stop to think. The impulse carries me away. . . I know of nothing which so takes me off my guard as the frigid, haughty, spiteful enmity of that Belle Forrester."

"How would it do to pray for her change of heart?"

"Pray for her, Nettie? Why it seems to me that it would be perfectly useless. She is apparently as unimpressible as that hearthstone. Her heart is all walled around by worldliness and pride."

"Therefore because of these conditions you limit the impressible power of the Spirit of God?"

Kate hesitated a moment, then she answered, truthfully:

"I suppose I do so limit it. I am wrong."

"You would find that by praying for her your anger and your impatience would gradually change to a most absorbing desire for her conversion.

"This accomplished, you would spare no endeavors to win her trust and affection in place of this enmity which seems a natural result of your interference with what she considers her social rights. If she once became your friend, you could not fail to influence her, with what glorious effects you can yourself imagine. From my first seeing you together I some way felt that your life would run quite close to hers, that your destiny would be more or less mixed up with hers. I was sorry to see how antagonistic her nature seemed to yours. Neither of you could complain of indifference, certainly. You had to either hate or love. It grieved me that the feeling was not love."

"I could not love one who so openly insulted you."

"Though honoring you for your courageous championship, I cannot help regretting its result."

"Have *you* forgiven her, entirely?" asked Kate, abruptly.

Before answering, Nettie hesitated. At last she said slowly:

"I cannot describe to you my struggles, Kate. I am as proud as Belle, herself; proud not of

wealth or beauty, but of real excellence and mental superiority. Besides this, I am exceedingly sensitive. I felt superior to her, knew that in the old days my society had been considered more attractive, my accomplishments more substantial and brilliant than hers. It was only my loss of wealth which had changed our relative position. This irritated, while it embittered me. I felt a sense of injustice, of rebellion against this false and pernicious social code. When on the night of his party Arthur treated me so kindly, I not only felt gratified, but absolutely triumphant. I enjoyed seeing Belle's surprise and chagrin. (I am telling you my heart, Kate, you can just see how full of sinful thoughts it was.) Not until days after did I realize what evil thoughts I had been cherishing, but it was too late: I could not banish them — they had been cherished too long. When I prayed, the vision of my own unforgiving spirit stood between me and God. . . But I must not make my story too long. At last I became conscious how useless it was to expect God to forgive my sins when I felt so unwilling to forgive these trivial injuries. This convinced me that if I wished to retain the old joy and comfort of prayer,

my whole feeling towards Belle must change. Finally something in one of Mr. Ellerton's sermons led me to resolve to pray for her, as well as for myself; and before I was taken sick I knew I had forgiven her. We cannot pray for a person and long cherish a feeling of antagonism to him. The two conditions are complete contradictions. . . I *know* that God will answer me. He is beginning too, already, by softening your heart towards Belle."

"How will that be an answer to your prayer?" asked Kate, from the depths in which she had buried her head.

"I feel that you are to be the instrument he will choose in order to influence her, to try and change her."

"Oh I could not approach — no — no!"

Almost involuntarily Kate put out her hand as though to ward off an unwelcome suggestion.

"I do not fear. I think you will surpass yourself in noble courage. You see she would not tolerate anything from *me*; but you have nothing to overcome but the effects of your own treatment of her. You acknowledge to yourself and to me that that has been unworthy of your better self.

Tell her so, and ask her to help you forget the past. Tell her you are changed, want to live near to Christ, ask her to think of living such a life, too."

"It seems impossible," said Kate, faintly. "In this matter I have so little courage."

"He giveth strength, always remember. . . But I am so tired, Katie, I don't believe I ought to talk any more, and you must go and study. I shall always regret this sickness of mine, if it tends to frustrate any of your plans and aims. I must not make too great demands upon your time."

"Don't trouble yourself my darling," said Kate earnestly, as she rose. "Time is not lost with you. I always feel clearer minded, stronger in purpose. . . I haven't much to do to-night. The examinations are on Euclid, to-morrow, and I worked at it this afternoon. I have but to review now."

"However could you concentrate your mind when it was so tangled up, and misty, and generally disordered, as you affirmed it was?" asked Nettie, in a surprised tone.

"I find mathematics my only salve for the woes

and ills of life," Kate answered, laughing. "But seriously, I suppose the reason was, that the mind demanded some counter-irritation, you might call it. I could not have worked up the usual quota of mental philosophy, or appreciated the poetry of Horace, but because geometry is so utterly unsympathetic, abstract, devoid of all moral quality, therefore I found relaxation and forgetfulness. But, dear child, you have so gently signified that my jargon is no longer required, and yet I stay. Why don't you expel me from your presence by main force? . . . Ah, Nettie!"

Her tone changed as if by magic, to one of earnest tenderness, as she seated herself on the wide arm of Nettie's chair, and drew its occupant's head down to her shoulder, meantime bending down her own head to kiss her again and again.

"Why does your influence so control and restrain me? You little dream of the wayward tendencies of my nature, the wild thoughts which surge and toss through my brain. Sometimes it seems as if I were on a wide stormy sea, now carried along on the crest of a mountain wave, then sinking down, down in the — in the — oh

dear! my rhetoric fails me," she added, as a sense of her high flight of eloquence took possession of her fancy. Nettie put up her hand, and gently, caressingly, patted the cheek resting against her own :

"I am happy that the sea of life on which we rock and toss, apparently the victims of every chance wind and wave, is still subject to the control of One who holds the waters in the hollow of his hand."

"Nettie, in spite of the remorse my own waywardness causes me, that is my greatest comfort. I often wonder how I have managed to live all these years without this trust in the might of God, without confidence that he leads and guides me in the way which he knows to be best and right, even if to me it appears difficult, uncertain, mysteriously dark. . . But I must go. Do you feel very tired?"

"Rather. But a good rest here alone, while you are studying, will make me feel bright for you when you come to read to me."

CHAPTER XXV.

IN THE WOODS.

"May we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips,
but in our lives, by giving ourselves up to thy service."

—*Book of Common Prayer.*

MR. BURTON had at last secured a lucrative position with a large firm in Woodbridge, and in spite of Nettie's sickness the family had been obliged to move thither. It was now two weeks since they had gone, and still Dr. Lockwood positively forbade Nettie's joining them, a decision not entirely due to his personal desires. He felt that her physical condition would not warrant any unnecessary excitement or expenditure of force.

Independent and proud-spirited as she was, Nettie could not avoid feeling often restless and dissatisfied with her own powerlessness and slow recovery to health; but all the Wallaces were not only kind and thoughtful, but appeared as though her presence were more an honor to them, than a favor to her, and so she was made very happy in Kate's home.

She tried to write a note to Arthur, but the pen made such fantastic, comical marks that she gave up in despair, and entrusted the task to her fellow-conspirator. His note ran thus:

"Dear Arthur:

"You remember one day in your library we spoke of gardens and roses and pickers? I've been thinking a good deal about these gardens and roses and pickers. Have you? Well, there has been a picker around in these parts of the country lately. He has picked a flower of fadeless beauty, to wear on his heart forever. Won't you come and see his choice? The winds have blown roughly over this treasure, and at one time we feared its life had departed; but when the sunshine of God's love and mercy shone so bright and clear, it revived. Won't you come out and see *my* choice?"

"Once I thought *you* had obtained this flower-treasure of mine. I need not tell you the thought caused me grief, that

the feeling of loss and privation was hard to bear; but — well, come!

“Both Nettie and I want to see you. Can’t you leave the fascinations of lawyers’ briefs for a week at home?”

“Yours very much,

“JACK.”

The next week flew by rapidly — all too rapidly for Kate’s desires. She was very busy, and every night a very tired girl came to read the Bible to Nettie before she went to sleep.

But Nettie’s watchful eyes saw that thoughts of triangles and circles not alone occupied her friend’s mind. She knew that amid the toil of “cramming,” and the excitement of examinations, Kate was living very near to Christ. Since their talk of a few nights before, Kate’s feeling towards Belle Forrester had undergone a sudden, and marked transformation. Not that she had learned to love her — no, not that, but the half-contemptuous impatience by which even her thoughts of Belle, as well as her actions towards her, had been controlled, certainly had disappeared.

It was the day for the final test of good scholarship. Every member of the graduating class was in a condition of feverish excitement, determined

to win if possible the golden honors presented to their eager grasp.

When Kate met Belle on the stairs, instead of passing her with a haughty inclination of the head, she said "good-morning," in as pleasant a tone as possible. Belle, apparently taken off her guard, and too surprised to consult her dignity by hesitating, returned the salutation involuntarily.

In the early spring it had not been unusual for the botany class to go off to the "woods" near the town, for the purpose of analyzing the wild flowers which grew there in such rich luxuriance. The season this year had been very backward, and now, though late in June, there were still flowers to be found in the cold, shady recesses where the sun had not penetrated through the thick undergrowth of trees.

For this afternoon an expedition had been planned, there was such a balmy softness in the air. The sky of that beautiful, clear blue, with the fleecy clouds piled up in masses of whiteness here and there.

Many besides the members of the botany class joined in the excursion. The last examination had been passed, and the girls were eager for some

active, physical exercise, as a relief from the close confinement and steady application of the last few weeks.

Belle and Kate were much thrown together during the course of the afternoon, although no more words than were absolutely necessary were exchanged. About sunset Belle unintentionally got separated from her friends, and wandering around by herself, grew at last confused and bewildered by the thick underbush which proved very inconvenient and troublesome, inexperienced as she was in all country expeditions and the hardships they entail.

She could hear no voices near, the woods seemed so silent, and it was darkening very fast among the shadows of the trees. Where was the path?

As she emerged from behind an immense oak she unexpectedly found herself face to face with Kate, who was sitting alone on a moss grown stump in the shade of which were nestling blue violets, and other wild flowers, which she was carefully examining.

Hearing a dry twig snap as Belle's unwary foot stepped upon it, she looked up and involuntarily

drew back, but the next moment smiled and ventured to say as she noted the intruder's tired face:

"It's hard work tramping around. The ground is so soft and slippery—damp too. Arn't your feet wet?"

"Yes," answered Belle, moving away towards a large stump in not too close neighborhood.

Kate resumed the examination of her flowers but their charm had vanished. She felt very uncomfortable. She wanted to propitiate her enemy, but the consciousness of a not yet subdued repugnance to her previous actions, so contrary to her present desires, created an effectual barrier to unrestrained conversation. The subject of damp feet being so soon exhausted she was puzzled where to find another—her ideas seemed all confused and vague—she never remembered feeling quite so stupid and commonplace before. Wouldn't it be best to gracefully retreat and wait a more convenient time for propitiation? She had risen to her feet and was about to execute this design when to her surprise Belle spoke:

"Where in the world are all the girls?"

"Most of them have gone home. I left them a while ago. They were half way down the hill."

"I've been at least an hour trying to find the Masons. I turned to look at a queer kind of moss. . . I am sorry to trouble you, but I don't believe I can find my way out of this dismal horrid place. For the life of me I can't tell in what direction the town lies."

"Come with me. It will be dark soon, and we ought to be on the way."

"Is it this direction, or that?" asked Belle, oblivious of all but her own question.

"That!" answered Kate concisely as she pointed where the ferns and shrubs grew thick and rank, with apparantly no space clear enough to permit Belle's progress. Noting her look of still greater perplexity, Kate added persuasively:

"I know a short cut."

"Well, I suppose I may as well." And Belle vacated her stump rather unwillingly.

Kate could think of nothing more to say, so in silence she led the way down the hillside.

But because of her familiar knowledge of the ground, her progress was more rapid than that

of her companion. Half-way down, she stopped and waited for Belle to approach. In breathless haste Belle had carelessly stepped in places which Kate had been wise and skilful enough to avoid. The latter with difficulty smothered a laugh over the, to her, ridiculous spectacle of the soiled, torn dress, the dainty boots covered with mud and clinging fragments of moss and dead leaves, surmounted by the owner's disgusted, pitiable expression, as she glanced down at them.

"Don't mind it," Kate said kindly. "It will be almost dark when we go through the streets. Let me loop up your skirt. We have to go over a very rough place yet, and the hill below this is very steep. Have you another pin?"

If Kate had been foretold that in this close nearness to the enemy such services as this would be accepted willingly, almost eagerly, she would have smiled incredulously. . . 'There!' You are all right. Give me your hand and we'll run down this inclined place together. It is not nearly such hard work. You know I am a regular climber and from my childhood have made these hills and woods one of my homes. There is no danger."

This was said in order to allay her companion's

fears and furnish an excuse for her own temerity in offering assistance.

If Belle had stopped to think of the mode of action dignity required her to sustain, she might have hesitated ; as it was she impulsively (and to her own subsequent surprise) seized Kate's strong flexible hand, and almost instantaneously the two were flying down the hill. Over rocks and stones and decaying *débris*, breathless with laughter and excitement, stopped at last by a broad, shallow stream flowing directly across the path.

"We can never get over this, unless we wade," said Belle despairingly, as they halted.

"On the other side of those bushes there's a little bridge which I helped to make years ago. I guess it is in good condition still."

"Well, let's rest here a minute. I'm not used to this rapid kind of travelling," and with a sigh Belle sat down on a narrow ledge of rock and gave herself a moment's secret thought. This sharp-tongued, sarcastic Kate Wallace was not such a formidable enemy, after all. She certainly had been thoughtful of her comfort ; and though her manners were often unusually abrupt and striking, her face was positively very fascinating

in its brightness. Though not at all necessary to indicate that the unpleasant past was forgotten, there could be no harm in pleasing her by a little condescension now, especially as she herself had made the first advances. So this egotistical young lady asked with an air of flattering interest:

“What boyish sweetheart was your fellow-architect?”

The opposite mountain tops were golden in the light of the setting sun and Kate was standing watching their varied colors and the shadows in the intervening valley with that intense, appreciative glance which reveals a soul sensitive to even the faintest impression of the grandeur and beauty of nature. Large masses of clouds fringed with purple, fast changing into gold, were rolling across the sky from the east; as they reached the zenith the retiring sun threw his rays upon them, and they were all in flames. A bank of clouds near the crest of the highest mountain, assumed to Kate's imagination the form of a vast cathedral, its spires and towers illumined by a fitful, lurid light — now they have tumbled into shapeless fragments, driven away by the wind on a shoreless sea. For a moment Kate had forgotten the pres-

ence of her companion. Her arms were folded in a free, yet close clasp, her head thrown back as if to miss no beautiful changes in the sky, her whole figure expressive of unconscious dignity and grace. The unpleasant, insinuating question disturbed the fine harmony of her thoughts, and roused the resentment which she fancied had been lulled effectually to rest. As she was engaged in quelling the tumult in her heart, she did not immediately answer.

"I presume you hear me, Miss Wallace. Who helped you to make the bridge?"

"As you have so wisely changed the wording of your question, I can answer it easily. Your cousin Arthur was my honored comrade."

Belle could not fail to notice the cold, distant tone. She was in no disposition to provoke the sarcasm, which she knew it so often betokened, yet she could not refrain from saying, curiously:

"Your friend Nettie Burton, will recover miraculously now, for he is coming home very soon. Aunt is almost crazy with expectation. However I suppose you are already aware of this?"

Coming home — coming home soon! . . . Kate felt she must make some reply, so she asked coldly:

"It is very pleasant. When will he come?"

"Next week. He wants to be here Commencement Day, and then he is thinking of going to Europe for the summer. There is a lawsuit in the English courts which he wants to see about; I don't know what for. It would be jolly good fun if he would take Eva and me with him."

And so Belle rattled on.

"Don't you think we had better start for home?" Kate asked at last, turning around. "It is darkening fast. . . Have you noticed the exquisite effect of light and shade on that old oak opposite us?"

All the way home Kate's mind was in a whirl of indecision, strong feeling and still stronger protest against the expression of that feeling. This opportunity for telling her changed views of life was certainly exceptional, and might not occur again, but it was so hard to speak of Christ to this worldly-minded, frivolous girl. It was not until they halted at the corner of Brunson street, that she had gained sufficient resolution to say in a husky, unnatural tone, and with much hesitation between each word:

"Belle Forrester, for several days I have wished

to tell you that I have become—that God has shown me that my past treatment of you has not only been unworthy of my best self, and detrimental to my dignity, but positively displeasing to him. It is my strongest desire to—to, in fact I wish to live more sure of his approbation. I want my life to be higher, nobler, more Christ-like, than it has ever succeeded in being. Will you help me instead of hindering me? . . . Belle Forrester will you forgive me?”

Belle's eyes opened in unfeigned astonishment. That the only girl in Belmont whom she feared, and whose allegiance she had always desired, should be thus suing humbly for her help and pardon was certainly flattering to her pride. She had at last conquered and brought her enemy to her feet! Could their intercourse be henceforth at least courteous, if not friendly, much unpleasant annoyance and trouble would be prevented. These motives influencing her, it was not strange she answered, “Yes, I forgive you.” And yet she could not forbear flinging one parting shot by way of memory for the past enmity:

“How long is it since your mind underwent

such a remarkable, and beautiful change in regard to religion? ”

The mocking, unsympathetic tone seemed exceedingly distasteful to Kate, foreign as it was to her own earnest mood, but with fine control, she answered gently :

“ Only a few weeks.”

“ Well, I wish you every success, and hope you will learn to keep that rather troublesome temper from annoying those who are unfortunate enough to provoke it. I never wished to be anything but friendly to you, Kate Wallace. You know how you treated me the night of aunt’s party. I acknowledge I don’t like Nettie Burton ; but you need not have been so touchy on her account. If she has any pluck she can fight her own battles. But I don’t suppose I shall have anything more to do with her now. I shall be really glad to forgive you everything. Aunt will be glad we’ve made up. She says it’s been a foolish quarrel ; and Eva likes you, and will want you to visit her if we stay all summer ; although I do not think we shall. You know she is a sort of Christian, and is rather inclined to like Christians too. Well good-night. If I ever get lost in the woods again

I shall be disconsolate if I don't stumble on you, peering into a damp hole for violets." With a radiant smile, and careless mood, Belle turned the corner. Her voice had changed in tone, her manner had become very charming during the last few sentences. Would Kate believe in their sincerity and trust their honesty?

To her as she walked swiftly homewards the result of the conference seemed at least to admit of self-congratulation.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MEETING.

"In the gloomy past bury the wrong
Thy wrath cannot mend;
Think but what in the future can repair it."
—*Lord Lytton.*

IT caused no small amount of happiness to her friends to discover that when the results of the examinations were made known, Kate Wallace stood first in almost all. She graduated with flying colors, yet wore her honors as though won from higher motives than either ambition or jealous competition.

It was because of no indifference to their value, that her thoughts during the commencement

exercises were chiefly concerned with her rival of the year — Edith Mason, and her former “enemy” — Belle Forrester. Edith’s scarcely concealed chagrin and envy surprised and pained her, indeed, she felt at one time like wishing for the power to change the conditions of her own triumph, and thus escape the ill-will of this comrade of three years.

Poor Kate did not know that the motives ruling Belle’s changed actions were love of ease and the fear of a warfare which had always resulted in her own discomforture. Kate’s earnest desire for peace had flattered Belle’s pride, and given her a very satisfactory sense of her own importance, and the effect of her personal fascination. Besides Kate was now, more than ever, the lion of the school, and Belle knew she must pay tribute in order to keep in the fashion.

As it was, Kate was very happy in the enjoyment of this frank, cordial relationship, and many times lost herself in dreams of the future, and the bright possibility of Belle’s becoming an earnest servant of the Lord Jesus — thus knit close to Nettie’s and her own heart in the bonds of a

friendship than which none could be purer or stronger.

Kate went home well-nigh tired out, besides suffering from a hard, nervous headache. She was glad enough to sit down by Nettie's side, and give her a graphic description of the interesting events of the afternoon.

She rattled on, oblivious of the strange, subdued excitement in her friend's eyes. She had taken a seat on the sofa in the parlor, one hand resting on a little Maltese kitten that on her entrance had sprung to meet her, the other grasping her straw hat. The back of the sofa was towards the door, hence she did not see a tall figure emerge from behind it, and stand on the threshold watching her.

Nettie occupied a large arm-chair opposite the sofa; a soft woolen shawl around her, the fringe of which was tied into knots again and again by her restless fingers, only to be impatiently untied.

"What have you done all day, Net?"

"Oh lots of things. . . Towards five o'clock an unexpected visit prevented me from getting lonely."*

"Did it? Who came?"

As Nettie spoke she looked searchingly into Kate's face. But Kate was silent.

"Is your mind bewildered with its multitude of suggestions?"

"No. The riddle is not hard. I suppose it was Arthur. Belle said he was coming."

"He saw you were surrounded by congratulations so he thought he would postpone his good wishes."

"You must permit me to offer them now," said a familiar, deep voice behind her. "I am proud, indeed, of my first schoolmate."

Kate sprang to her feet and looked at the advancing figure in startled bewilderment.

CHAPTER XXXII.

CONFESSION.

"This is the great step of our life—to change the nature of our self-reliance."—*Margaret Fuller.*

LATER in the evening Kate was sitting on the outer edge of the long verandah, Walter Burton and Jack stretched out on the steps at her feet, Mr. Wallace and Will a little way back.

Sheltered from the thick-falling dew, Mary Ashworth and Nettie were inside the window, and Arthur just outside, half leaning in. Mrs. Wallace was not very near the others, yet she could distinctly hear Kate's and Jack's merry voices.

and Arthur's lower, more carefully chosen words, — marred now and then by an unaccountable tinge of bitter sarcasm.

Twilight passed, and the night set in starless — the atmosphere heavy and damp, betokening a storm. The tall trees and shrubs of the garden became like grim phantoms, then one by one were lost to view in the dense darkness.

Finally Mr. Wallace rose and ordered the two girls away from the window, telling Jack to help him in with the chairs.

"Are you not coming Katherine? We're going to have music," that person asked as he jumped up.

"In a minute. The music sounds beautifully at a distance. Have Net play Mendelssohn's 'Sighing Wind' while I sit here."

The music began, but the minute lengthened into many, ere Kate felt willing to break the silence of her own thoughts by joining the company inside.

Arthur had established himself near the window, the light from which streamed out on the verandah and fell in faint gleams on Kate's dress and motionless figure.

When Mr. Wallace rose to move the lamp to

the other side of the room, the rest of the party gathered more closely around the piano, and amid the bustle of the movement Arthur could not resist the impulse to join Kate.

"Are you not afraid of catching cold?" he asked, pausing beside her.

"No! I've something to tell you. Sit down."

The quick, decided voice, the unusual seriousness of manner impressed him strangely. Secretly wondering, he took a seat on the steps.

"I can't tell you how glad I am to get back here, he said looking up, "and yet even in this short time things have changed—people don't seem the same."

"How easily we drift away into a new life," Kate answered, drawing her fingers over her eyes. *You* have changed too."

"I? How is that? I thought I was always the same. Tell me in what."

"I think you have grown quieter, almost stern, and there are indications of a morbid, bitter kind of sarcasm—"

"My fair cousins could inform you that the indications of that were present when I went away," he interrupted. "But we must not take

this as a thermometer to note changes of temperature. . . You will not accuse me of repartee if I say *you* are different."

"Am I? I am so glad you think so. That is what I wished to speak of to you. . . Arthur, I hope I *am* different from the careless, thoughtless, apparently heartless girl of last winter. Life has seemed more earnest, and full of meaning, lately, and I am very happy in knowing that Christ is my Saviour, my very own, that nothing can separate me from him."

Arthur did not reply when she paused. She went on hurriedly :

"All the evening I have wanted you to know that I have become one of those Christians you and I used to watch and criticize."

"Yes, I suppose you intend to live so that no one will watch and criticize *you*."

The tone of his voice was very faintly sarcastic but her quick sensitive ear noticed it.

"My life cannot be flawless, but it must and shall be devoted to Christ. Whether he will make it above criticizing, I cannot tell. I trust him with it, any way."

"How this faith in a remote object blinds the

judgment! I thought you too strong, too independent for this, Kate."

"Oh Arthur, please don't!"

The deep sadness in her voice touched his quick sympathies.

"Forgive me, Kate. I didn't intend to grieve you. I would rather do anything than that."

"But you do not care to think of me as a Christian? You cannot sympathize with me in this?"

"No, I can't, and I am really exceedingly sorry that you are losing your independence of mind and intend to put your life in certain fixed, unalterable moulds — in fact subject to the unlimited and capricious control of a purely imaginary being. . . I am honest enough to say this, instead of expressing congratulations which would be a mere mockery."

"Purely imaginary! Oh Arthur, you have no conception then of the feeling which comes from the firm *conviction* that there is an infinite God who condescends to be our Father."

"I was talking about Christ as being imaginary, no man with common sense can doubt there is a

God. . . But your voice is getting hoarse out here, and I want you to sing for me before I go."

"I have sung very little lately. I have been so busy, and then —"

"Yes, I know. Nettie says you have been most unselfish in attending her."

"But that was not what I was going to say. You are too immature in your conclusions. I suppose we had better go in."

"Not just yet."

"Then you must take the consequences of my hoarseness. How contradictory you are!"

He laughed and jumped up, asking roughly:

"Why don't you treat me as you did last winter?"

"Do I not? . . . Well I suppose I am too tired to-night to trouble very much about you. Besides," her voice grew lower, "besides, I must try now not to grieve any one by thoughtless, unkind, or careless words. Don't provoke me too much, however, for I warn you I am not yet above criticism. The wings haven't yet begun to grow."

With a joyous, hearty laugh, she sprang to her feet, and not waiting for his reply, crossed with quick steps the threshold of the window.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

STRUGGLES.

"The eminence on which her spirit stood, mine was unable to attain. Immense the space that severed us."

—*Wordsworth's Excursion.*

FREE from the control of Euclid and the Latin Poets, the next few weeks were one joyous holiday for Kate, and almost with the feelings of a child she threw her whole soul into Arthur's plans for drives, picnics, boat-rides and other summer amusements. There were many pleasant visitors in Belmont, Mrs. McDonald filled her house with friends, and thus the absence of the Forresters caused less regret.

In spite of the happiness Arthur's presence and the knowledge of his love gave her, Kate could not help anticipating future sorrow.

She realized now how much she had hoped for his conversion to the religion which had become her greatest source of joy. But she knew his scepticism was firmer than before, even antagonistic, whereas it had been only critical. She knew she could not speak of Christ to him with any expectation of meeting a satisfactory response, hence on this subject there would be no mutual sympathy; into the most sacred recesses of her heart she could not admit him. . . Could she then become his wife? Could she be happy, could she be her own true self, could her life be devoted to Christ and his work, as she wanted it to be? Perhaps her own faith would gradually grow dim and faint, at last wholly obscured by heavy clouds of doubt, if she were always with Arthur, under the continual influence of his strong nature. Indeed she felt his silent influence even during these few weeks.

She knew she loved Christ—how much she loved him only he himself knew. She wanted day by day to become more and more like him. She

wanted her own will to become merged in his, thus one motive to rule her whole life. Would she not be wilfully throwing barriers in the way of the accomplishment of this purpose, would she not be disloyal to the king she had set over her, if she married Arthur? Oh it was a hard thing to decide, and the young heart many times grew faint and discouraged in moments of silent battle with these thoughts.

She could not bear to think of being separated from him—it would be so hard. Harder still to witness his disappointment and know it was in her power to change it all into joy.

Perhaps she could win him to Christ, perhaps this was just the work God had intended for her, and in this thought the puzzled brain would for a time rest. But then the possibility of failure, hence the certainty of her own Christian influence becoming weak and powerless, would agitate the mind again.

With her usual reserve Kate kept these troubles secret. During the day she was bright and joyous—sincerely so; but at night, alone with God, she struggled and prayed for wisdom and guid-

ance in this strange necessity. At least the struggle ended in an unalterable decision.

It was Sunday night. The last faint rays of the dying sun were shining through the open windows of the old church as the pastor entered the pulpit accompanied by a stranger who, on an evangelistic tour, had come to Belmont.

Nettie was in her old place in the gallery, Kate by her side. The service was almost ended ere Arthur came. He had been for a long walk in the woods that afternoon, and the church bells were already ringing when he had started for home. As his pew had been filled he stole up to the gallery and unknown to the girls took a seat behind them.

The gas was not turned up during the sermon: a beautiful twilight in the old church.

Kate's elbow rested on the railing in front, the hand supporting the chin, while her eyes were fastened intently on the speaker.

'To her astonishment his sermon was founded on the text: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers;" and the gravely spoken words appealed directly to her conscience, though they sank like a heavy weight upon her heart.

But she took them as the very voice of God to her; and as such they must be obeyed.

"The Christian," the preacher* said, "must be as the light that he may expel darkness, not that he may mix satisfactorily with it. We hear now-a-days of the church coming down to the world, and the world coming up to the church; but God teaches the Christian that he must live in holy opposition to the world. Find out what God and his divine principles are, and then ask him to teach us how to allow these divine principles to work divinely in us. . . As a law of life the Christian should ask himself, is it lawful? Our text gives us a practical command. It is generally referred to marriage. A Christian man has no *right* to marry an unconverted woman; and a converted woman has no right to marry an unconverted man. . . Marriage is the primary thought in the text, but it is not the only one. A Christian has no *right* to ally himself with an unbeliever in business, in pleasure, in anything where the union may prove detrimental to his living to God's glory. Let each apply this command to his own special case."

*Rev. W. S. Rainsford.

Kate did not hear everything after that. Her head went down on the railing in front; she was only conscious of needing help to obey the command. Then in the midst of her passionate prayer the closing words of the sermon caught her ear:

“Many lives are like the broken pillars we see in our cemeteries: fair pedestals, but broken shafts; a fair beginning but a broken end. *Only* walk as saints. Remember that to live is not gold, not happiness, not fame, not sin, but Christ. Lord, teach us to be willing to be taught only to walk worthy of thee. . . Earthly love no longer dearest, earthly praise no longer sweetest; earthly hopes no longer brightest; we, Christ’s followers look up and say: our crown, our hope, our life, our Head, our Lord is *there*. Earthly life is infinitely second, and heavenly life is infinitely first.”

After the benediction, Kate was startled by Mr. Derwent’s voice at her elbow:

“Good sermon, Miss Wallace. A mighty earnest fellow, but too extreme by all odds. . . We wavered a little in the last hymn, because you did not sing. You have a headache, I presume? I’ve heard about them. You must take care. By the

way can't you stay and run over the hymns for next Sunday? I have a new tune here."

"I wish you would excuse me."

"Oh, don't refuse, Kate," exclaimed Jane Digby coming over to the alto side of the organ.

"Very well, I will," answered Kate, as her eye noticed Arthur standing in the doorway.

"Net," she whispered, "please take him home with you. Tell Will to wait for me," and Kate turned away and took up her hymn book. To her relief Nettie disappeared down the stairway, accompanied by Arthur.

But when ten minutes later she herself emerged from the wide doorway of the old church, she found the latter awaiting her at the gate.

"Why didn't you go home with Nettie?" she asked abruptly.

"Will didn't seem inclined to stay, so I —"

"Made yourself a martyr for the sake of galantry. Thank you, exceedingly."

Not since last winter had Arthur been received with this curt, sarcastic tone. Ah! he little dreamed of the sharp pain which caused it.

"I am sorry if my escort will be unwelcome," he said gently.

"Forgive me, Arthur. I feel very tired, and my head aches, and for a moment I was cross. I won't do so any more."

The quick, impulsive, frank confession, entirely removed the impression her first words had conveyed. He added, as she took his arm :

"I wanted to wait for you. You see I watch carefully all my treasures."

Kate did not reply, but quickened her steps ; her eyes were on the sidewalk and Arthur was watching her. At last he said again :

"I think that minister has bewitched you. You have been as gloomy as a storm-cloud ever since your eyes lit on him. I shall be jealous, and fear you have fallen in love with him."

"I don't see what *right* you would have to be jealous," said Kate, with a flash of her old spirit.

Arthur laughed :

"No right certainly, but what I usurp. I haven't even in so many words told you that I always think of you as belonging to me, but I have felt it longer than you suppose. Kate ! look at me, please. I have never yet dared to ask you if you agree."

Kate felt a very disagreeable lump in her throat,

which made her voice husky and broken. She answered, though she did not raise her eyes:

"Arthur, I belong to some One else, first. He tells, me, you know—but oh! don't talk to me just now."

At that moment she heard a quick step behind her, and a voice exclaim breathlessly:

"Miss Wallace!"

"Why, Johnnie, what is it?" and Kate stooped down to the little fellow who had grasped her cloak.

"Won't you come back home? I run to the church and you wasn't there. Minnie's awful sick since you was there this morning."

"Yes, indeed. Arthur, will you come?"

"Where?"

"To see a poor sick girl in Dunkirk lane. She was at the hospital when I first visited her, but she has gone home. Her father is a drunkard," Kate whispered. "She is dying of consumption—a girl of great beauty and very refined. Will you come?"

"Why certainly. Come Johnnie, lead the way."

Kate did not speak during the long, swift walk

which followed. She gave one hand to Johnnie by her side, and listened passively to Arthur's occasional words.

At last they came to a narrow lane, which terminated at the door of a low, desolate looking cottage. Johnnie sprang forward and opened the door, while Kate and Arthur not less quickly followed.

A half-consumed tallow candle burned dimly on a small, deal table, by the side of which a man was sitting, rocking to and fro — his hands grasping a huge black bottle, bottom upwards and corkless. In the furthest corner of the room was a small bed, on which lay a young girl as if sleeping. As Kate's swift footsteps sounded on the bare floor, the eyelids opened, disclosing eyes of wonderful beauty, their size apparently increased by contrast with the thin cheeks.

"Ah, Miss Katie, I knew you'd come if you could," she said in a faint whisper, as she grasped Kate's hand. "I am almost there, but I wanted to see you once more. Is that the doctor?"

"No, Minnie; it is Mr. McDonald — Dr. Lockwood's friend."

"Does he belong to the Lord, too?" asked the sick girl, turning her large, wonderful eyes upon him.

"What did she say?"

"She wants to know if you love the Lord Jesus," said Kate, the tears coming as she thought of the inevitable answer, "No, I do not."

"Why doesn't he love him, Miss Katie?"

"I do not know, my darling; pray that he may. But do not talk. Let me turn these pillows."

With a skilful, delicate touch, Kate arranged the pillows, turned down the coverlid of the bed, and then, with her cool hands pushed back the brown hair which clung in damp heavy masses to the hot forehead.

"Ah, that is so lovely! I've been thanking my Father all day for sending you to tell me about his love for me. I've been ever so happy since you went away this morning. . . I am going to him very soon, now. I wish I could take you with me."

"I am not ready to go yet, Minnie," said Kate, hiding her face among the brown curls. "I have work to do for Him, you know."

"Oh yes, and when you come I—"

But the faint voice grew inaudible, and Kate, with a swift motion of her hands, lifted the head to her own shoulder. A smile very sweet and strange passed over Minnie's face, and she looked up at Kate lovingly.

"Arthur, hand me that glass. Now Minnie try and take some. It will give you strength to speak."

But the dying girl only shook her head. The breath came quicker and quicker, in hard gasps, a film grew over the eyes, but still Kate supported the drooping head, and Arthur stood and watched them both.

At last Minnie roused from her death-like stupor and called faintly, "Father."

The man by the table ceased rocking, and looked over to the bedside. Kate could see he was not intoxicated; her quick eye detected the grief in his face.

"Father?"

"What is it, little girl?" and he came with unsteady steps toward her.

But he was never answered. With a faint ex-

clamation her head dropped from Kate's shoulder the hand which her little brother had been grasping in his own, grew rigid, and the life in swift flight departed.

CHAPTER XXIX.

VICTORY.

"God knows that I am feeble like the rest,"

—*Mrs. Browning.*

THE walk home was very silent. It could not be otherwise with such feelings agitating both Kate's and Arthur's hearts.

But as they stood on the verandah the latter spoke:

"I will come to-morrow and have a little talk with you. I feel we do not thoroughly understand each other, even yet. May I see you alone?"

His tall form was leaning against a pillar, and he was looking down at her. But her eyes were so full of tears she could see nothing. The effort to be calm made her voice almost cold and hard:

"You may come, only do not hope for happiness. I cannot—"

But here she stopped.

"Why, Kate!" He seized her hands in his firm, but gentle way. "I want you to be my wife. I've loved you for long years. Lately I've fancied that you loved me... Is it not so?"

"Yes."

"Then why cannot I hope for happiness—the best happiness in all my life?"

"Because I cannot be your wife. That sermon to-night taught me what I must do."

"Oh child! child! what superstition, what blindness! You would trample on your heart's best love, you would make me wretched, miserable, worthless, in fanatic allegiance to an ideal! Oh Kate, I didn't think this of you."

"Please don't, Arthur. I cannot bear to hear you talk so to-night; God knows I love you, would do anything for you except intentionally disobey him... You cannot understand these things—

some day perhaps you will, and if you come to me then, I'll be ready. . . But don't blame me now. It is harder for me than for you, because it is I who endure the sorrow of knowing that I inflict pain on you. Always remember that I loved you. . . Perhaps you had better not come tomorrow."

"No, I must try and reason you out of this idea."

"You cannot do it," said Kate, looking at him with a faint smile. "You know how firm I've always been in my decisions. This one is unalterable. I assure you it is. I am not trying to test your — your love."

There was a pause and then she continued:

"I had hoped a great deal from your reading Nettie's Bible. Had you forgotten your promise?"

"No. I have read every night, but I confess it's only because I promised. The book is such a dull treatise on morality, and I never inclined to that branch of science."

"Suppose I ask you to give it a thorough examination for my sake — for mine, Arthur. And pray to God to teach you its meaning. If you do this I *know* we shall not be separated long."

"How can I pray, Kate, when I do not believe God is a being who answers the prayers of such creatures as we are?"

"You know absolutely nothing about God, except what the Bible says, and that clearly tells us he does hear prayer."

"Well, I promise I will study it as I never did before. . . If I do this and you feel so sure I will come to agree with you, why not now become mine — all mine?"

His voice trembled:

"Oh Arthur, I cannot. Your influence over me is so strong. Ever since you have been here the little doubts you have so often expressed have injured me. They used to do me harm."

"Therefore you are so holy that you do not wish to —"

"Oh Arthur, don't! You will break my heart."

With a smothered sob she sank down on the step on which she had been standing, and buried her face in her hands.

"Forgive me, darling," he exclaimed, his voice breaking. "I didn't mean it that way. . . I know I am no Christian, but I am not humble enough to think my influence would do you harm. If it

tended to draw away your mind from some of these morbid fancies, I would be doing a noble work. But Katie, look up. It is getting very late, and I am going. You must go in. Will you forgive me? And let me see you to-morrow." He stooped down and lifted her face. "Please think again before you finally answer me. I hope a great deal. And Katie, tell me once more you love me. If you do, we must, *shall* not, be separated. If you still say, we must, I shall think you do not."

"I suppose you will imagine I love myself more. Oh how I wish you understood that I must obey a high command."

"Well, perhaps, I shall. If ever a man lived who wanted to know the truth, and when he found it would value it, I am that man. So if your religion is true, I shall accept it. . . You will try and make me happy to-morrow?"

"I have already answered you, Arthur. If you come to-morrow, it will be only to say farewell."

He looked at her in silence, a deep, dark shadow flinging itself across his face which was reflected in her own. He grasped her hands once more in one close clasp and then hurried down the

footpath leading to the gate. Kate waited till his steps were lost far down the street and then she opened the front door, and entered the house.

CHAPTER XXX.

TWO OR THREE EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF FOUR YEARS.

"Fulfil now oh Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be most expedient for them; granting us in this world, knowledge of thy truth; and in the world to come life everlasting."—*Book of Common Prayer.*

THE four years which followed were years of joy mingled with disappointment; of happiness darkened by the ever-present shadow of grief. Arthur left for New York almost immediately after his last interview with Kate; and Mrs. McDonald, unable to bear the loneliness of the house on the hill, urged the Forresters to make it their residence until he should be willing to come back to Belmont.

Arthur's absence from Nettie's wedding, which took place in the autumn, proved a great disappointment to Jack who wanted him for his "best man." Nettie refrained from expressing her own disappointment, because she fancied Kate was some way concerned in the cause, although Kate had not ventured to tell any one the reason why her friendly relations with Arthur had so suddenly terminated.

Towards the end of the second winter, news came that he had thrown up his engagement with Lovell & Black, and intended to sail for Europe after paying a flying visit home. Kate did not see him, though she received from Belle Forrester graphic descriptions of his conversations and personal appearance.

"He was more irresistible than ever," she said "a sort of recklessness about him which looked strange; but he didn't look at all dissipated."

When six months had passed, and Mrs. McDonald was looking for his return, he sent word that he had gone with a company of Englishmen into Greece, thence to travel to Egypt.

To Kate, who alone knew the cause of such restless wandering, his absence was a source of

continual sorrow. And as much because of anxiety for his welfare, as for her own loneliness. But she kept busy, had definite plans for study, and work for the Master — indeed she tried to look at every duty as work done for him. Amid many discouragements and failures she was advancing, instead of going back in the Christian life. Her old sins were by no means conquered, but she was learning by degrees to depend less and less upon her own endeavors, and trust more invariably in the divine strength of the Saviour.

The sacrifice of so much earthly happiness for his sake had brought with it blessings. In answer to her constant prayer and desire, he became to her the dearest, most precious friend of her whole life, a presence as real and tangible as is seen by the material vision.

The consciousness also that she was useful in his service, that he permitted her to speak to others of the wonderful message from God to man, gave her great happiness. Her great aim was to "bury her own sorrow," to give to others the sunshine of her thoughts and feelings. Thus in trying to comfort those hearts "growing weary with heavier woe;" in calling smiles into the pale,

weary faces of suffering children, who thought her face the brightest they had ever seen out of their own fanciful dreams; in cultivating her own spirit, the years passed. And gradually, to her surprise, as well as joy, a close feeling of friendship sprang up between her and Belle Forrester. The enmity had merged so slowly into friendship, they neither were conscious how really sure the change had been.

Contact with Kate's frank, honest mind, the continual influence of her nobler thoughts and purposes changed Belle's character, too. One would hardly have recognized her to be the frivolous proud and selfish girl she had been before.

Kate was very joyful when Belle became thoroughly reconciled to Nettie who had been expecting all this so long, but her joy became yet deeper and more intense when Belle became finally reconciled to Christ, and took him for her guide and King and Saviour.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AFTER FOUR YEARS.

"Weak to resist; strong to requite thy love."

—*Philip Van Arterside.*

AT last the wanderer wrote that he was tired and homesick, and had sailed for home. By the same mail which brought this intelligence to Mrs. McDonald a letter came to Kate. She had been at the hospital all day, and tired — yes, and a little low-spirited — had reached home about seven, to find Mr. and Mrs. Wallace absent. It was not until she established herself by the

library fire that she noticed the letter lying on the table.

These four years have not changed Kate very much. The plump cheek has thinned a little, and the dark blue eyes have a thoughtful, deep-hearted expression, which they had not when we first knew her, but the face has its old brightness. Indeed it is more invariably bright — not so often shadowed by quickly changing moods.

The letter was long and closely written ; hard to read through the thick mist of tears which dimmed the sight of the reader :

“ My Dearest :

“ You remember you told me that you could never forget me, that your love for me would never change, that if I ever believed as you do and came back again asking for the joy of your presence, you would not refuse ?

“ It does not seem to me that these four years have changed all this.

“ Kate, I am coming home at last ; you can never know how my heart beats at the thought of seeing you again. But before I meet you I wish to tell you of a great happiness which has come into my life, a happiness in which, thank God ! I know that you can share.

“ Kate, I have learned to love your Saviour, learned to

trust him as I thought I could trust no one, learned to revere him as my *God*.

"I cannot analyze this change, indeed, I can only fasten on its cause. When we parted the grief was so hard to bear that I felt willing to do anything to win you back. So you see my primary motive in seeking Christ was selfishness. But that soon changed to the old desire for truth. It was not until I was in Egypt, that I found out my search had all the time been directed the wrong way.

"Among our party was a young fellow, a Christian, who was of great service to me. He was the evangelist who preached that night in the old church those words which sealed my fate. At first I treated him coldly; couldn't endure the sight of him; the remembrance of that night was too vivid.

"But at last he won me for his friend; and once in a fit of unaccountable frankness, I told him about you, and then asked him what I could do in order to believe in Christ. He said you had decided wisely, because if you had not given me up, I would probably not now be so anxious to believe as you do. . . . Kate, my own beloved, I see *now* that you were right, that in being loyal to the Lord Jesus you were in reality the kindest to me. But for that I might still be shrouded in that thick, black darkness of heart upon which I look back with such sorrow and remorse.

"When I came back to England my friend came too. But after that I lost sight of him. Finally one morning I ran across him at the National Gallery. I was espec-

ially unhappy, had spent two hours with the Bible, praying for pardon, and yet feeling every moment an added sense of sin.

"He took my arm, and we went out into the street, he meanwhile trying to explain again God's way of pardoning me. At last I saw it, saw it all. There, in that busy London street, with the crowds of people hurrying past, I gave my heart to God. And yet, Kate, it had taken four years to make me willing.

"I cannot wait to tell you my struggles of mind, the doubts, the temptations which I had fought. It was hard to bring down my pride, hard to let Christ do everything for me, instead of doing it for myself. But I found that when once my heart-pride was subdued, my intellectual difficulties grew less. I cannot say that they have entirely gone, but I trust my Father will keep me from ever allowing them to hide his face. . . Now, Kate, will you be my wife; will you help me, rather will you let me help you, work for this Master of ours? How hard it is to think of the years I have wasted when I might have been winning others to his service!

"I am writing on shipboard, and shall post this when I reach New York. After seeing Mr. Lovell, I shall start for Belmont, and hope to see you Thursday evening about nine o'clock. I must see mother first, you know, though my heart is with you, even now. . . If you *have* changed, let there be a note for me at home. . . I cannot bear to think of that possibility.

"Your devoted

ARTHUR."

Thursday evening! Why the letter must have been waiting for her ever since morning! She threw back the hair which had fallen down over her forehead and looked at the clock. It was half-past nine. . .

Even at the same moment the door-bell rang and she heard a well known voice enquiring for her.

With the precious letter grasped tightly in her hand, Kate and Arthur stood face to face.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE END.

"My future will not copy fair my past."—*Mrs. Browning.*

IT was a glorious winter evening. The moonbeams fell on icy evergreens and snow-capped hills, while their light was thrown back again, changed into flashing diamonds. Just such an evening as that long ago when Nettie Burton and Arthur took that never-to-be-forgotten drive and he told her of his love for Kate.

And now it was the night before his wedding. Nettie had been the entire day with Kate, and

back towards eight o'clock came to spend the evening. When Arthur finally arrived, he was accompanied by his mother and two cousins.

As Nettie looked back along the track of years and remembered all their sorrows and heartaches, and hardly-won battles with temptations, there was mingled with her happiness a feeling of earnest solemnity, not unshared by Kate. Indeed Kate could not have told which feeling was the stronger.

The future stretched before her, bright with anticipation of companionship with one she honored, and could trust and love, full of possibilities of work for Christ which her eager heart longed to change into realities. It was a long beautiful vista, the end wrapped in a golden haze which no mortal eye could penetrate.

In a pause in the now merry, now earnest talk, Dr. Lockwood exclaimed suddenly as a sense of the change in Arthur swept over him almost like a *shock* of joy:

"I said once I must forever relinquish the charms of some familiar boyish sports; but I feel strangely like indulging to-night."

"Arthur looks so comfortable there, I believe

I am safe in saying I will give you and him permission," said Mrs. Wallace, looking up from her work.

Arthur occupied a large arm-chair beside Belle Forrester. Her hand rested on the arm of it, and every now and then, Arthur's hand would close over hers in obedience to an impulse he did not care to resist. Their new love to the Master had brought the cousins very near to each other.

He could see Kate where she was sitting on a low seat on the other side of the fire, her eyes resting on the glowing coals. Yet whenever she would turn to speak in a voice growing deeper and richer as her thoughts became more and more earnest, her eyes would always meet his for a moment — language whose meaning was unguessed by any but themselves. And so the talk drifted on, until at last Jack asked Arthur if he would go again into business with Lovell & Black.

Before he replied Arthur rose from his seat and began pacing the floor restlessly. Then with a quick glance at his mother, he answered :

"Jack, I haven't spoken to any of you, except Kate, about my plan. Indeed it was only yesterday that with any truth I could call my somewhat

vague reverie a plan. Soon after I returned home Mr. Ellerton spoke to me about it and ever since he has urged, nay implored me to decide as he felt sure God wished me to decide. I cannot help considering his words as perhaps a message from God to me. Jack you know I am bound to win souls for Christ, whether I accomplish anything else in life or not, and I believe I could do this work better if I preached."

"What! give up all you've won in law when you've had such prospects of success?" asked Mrs. McDonald, excitedly. "Don't Arthur, I beg of you, go from one extreme to the other. I always wanted you to be a Christian, but not a fanatic.

"I suppose my fair cousin too, will think that I would be foolish to jump to clerical dignities," said Arthur, glancing at Eva.

She had been watching him as he halted opposite to Jack, and now as his eye met hers her face flushed. Then she said hesitatingly and with a strange tremble in her voice:

"My life has been such that you have reason, Arthur, to think I like only worldly honor and riches and splendor; but when I tell you what

my future life is to be you may think differently. I have never forgotten that missionary meeting the first evening we came to Belmont; it gave me such a strong impression of what religion really is. But since Kate and Belle have been such friends, it has been Kate's influence more than anything, which has made me resolve to make my life different from what it has been. I never before realized what a grand as well as solemn thing it is to be a Christian. I know I have been one all these years, but in a blind stumbling kind of way. . . Now Arthur I want you to be a minister. It seems the noblest profession a man can choose. But to return to myself. Yesterday I received a letter from Mr. Greenville, saying that in response to his offer, his services as a missionary to India have been accepted. Then he asks if I will be willing to endure the hardships of a foreign life. . . In spite of almost overwhelming misgivings as to my fitness, I have answered him that I am willing. . . So Arthur you may jump to clerical dignities, but I shall jump further still — ”

She stopped, unable to control the trembling of her voice. Arthur's eyes were dim with tears. “You honor me by telling me this,” he said, with

an affectionate look at her downcast face. "May our Father give you physical strength and every blessing. . . Jack! pray, pray for us both."

So with subdued hearts they all knelt down, and Dr. Lockwood prayed. To Arthur the Spirit of God seemed very near—a more tangible presence than even that of his friends, whom he could have touched and felt. In that rapt moment of happiness he forgot the few lingering aspirations of his heart for worldly honor and success, and determined to give himself *entirely* to God. When they arose Mrs. McDonald could see by the expression of his eyes that he had decided. Against that decision, whatever it might be, she knew it would be useless to remonstrate. A few minutes after, her sleigh was announced.

"Arthur I suppose you are not coming yet? I can take Nettie home if she is ready:"

"By all means, mother. Jack you'll have to go alone. . . I have my key," he added, as he stood at the gate and tucked the fur robes around the ladies.

"Pat, take Mrs. Lockwood home first."

"All right, yer honor."

Almost instantaneously the horses dashed away.

‘How gloriously beautiful the night is!’ continued Arthur, his eyes resting with delight on the diamond floored road stretching far away to the hills beyond.

“Yes, and then the lovely crystals of ice on the evergreens,” replied the doctor, as he lit his cigar.

“Do you smoke much now?” asked Arthur, with his hand on the gate.

“No. Why?”

“Because, if I were you I would give it up entirely. We Christians don’t want even one *foolish* habit to become strong. We want to be like the Chevalier Bayard, not only without fear, but without reproach.”

“That’s so old fellow, you’re right. Oh! if I had always had your self-control I would never have sunk so low as I did!”

“All my self-control and high ideas of morality didn’t make me happy or useful, Jack. It was only when I found out how really poor and mean and ignoble were even my purest motives, and yet how great Christ was, that happiness came to me. Oh, sometimes it is hard to realize how really happy I am. But I must go in. By the

way, what are you going to do with that cigar?"

"Why, I mustn't waste it."

"Better begin right off."

"All right, here goes."

Jack dug a little hole in the snow, and with a comical gesture expressive of despair placed in it the offending cigar. It went out quickly.

"There," he said, with an emphatic stamp of his foot on the frozen ground. "There is another trophy of a victory over myself. Oh, Arthur! no one knows what my life has been! I tell you, there is *no hope* for a man who went as far as I did, unless he becomes a believer in Christ, and thus gains his strength to help him. No hope whatever. . . But you must go in. . . I haven't formally congratulated you yet. It's a grand thing to have a dear little wife."

"Mine isn't very little. She is stately and tall, and commanding. But she's a noble, grand girl, and I *am* to be congratulated. . . I've gathered my rose at last, Jack, and its fragrance is none the less sweet for having waited for it four long years. But good-night, old fellow. There's Kate at the door wondering why I don't hustle you off. . . Pray for me a *great deal*, Jack. There are some

hard battles before me—battles with my own pride, self-will and impatience. I shall have to fight going up the hill, you know, for I am determined to gain the heights of life which my heart desires, and fighting up the hill is always hard. . . Good-night."

With a close, boyish embrace, the two friends separated.

And the precious moonlight fell on Jack's pathway all the way home.

When Arthur re-entered the house, Kate had already resumed her place by the fire. He turned down the gas and after drawing up the curtains of the window to let the moonlight come in to shine in wide silver bands across the carpet he motioned Kate to a seat by his side.

Thus, in talking over the love for each other, and for the Saviour to whom they had consecrated their hearts, the minutes flew by on golden wings.

THE END.

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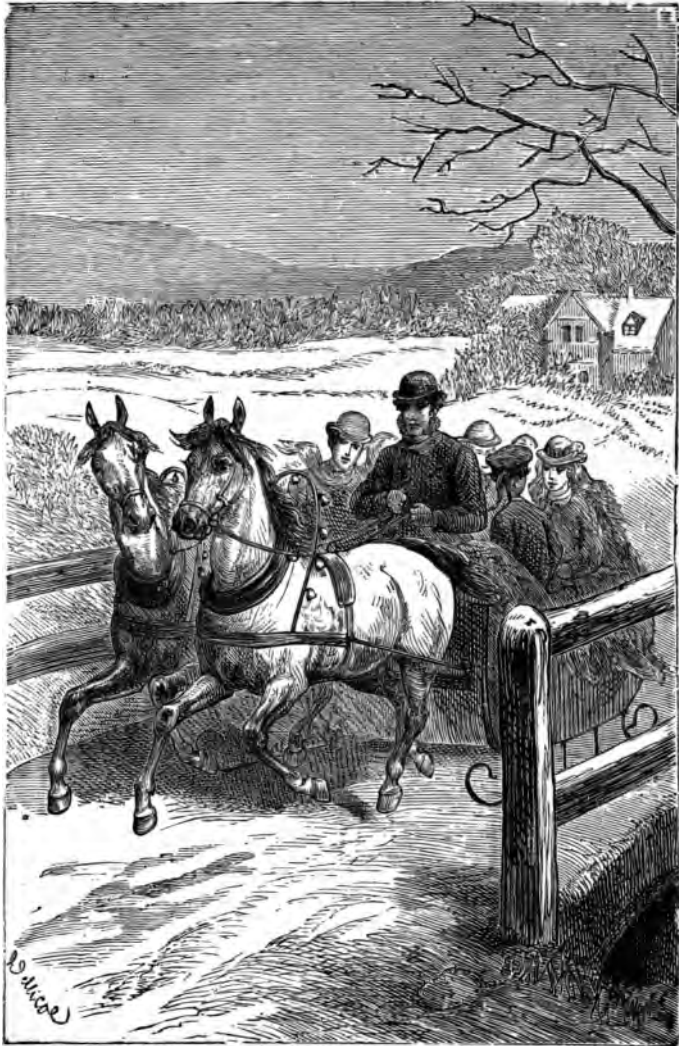
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